

**Revolutionary**

**14**

# Perspectives



## **After Kosovo: Where Next?**

**NATO War in Yugoslavia**

**Why Was the Opposition to War so Weak?**

**Asylum Bill and Crocodile Tears for the Refugees**

**London Bombings - Who is the Hidden Enemy?**

**Food Crises•Trade Wars**

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**The Debt Crisis Continues**



**Revolutionary Perspectives**  
**Quarterly Magazine of the Communist Workers Organisation**  
**British Affiliate of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party**  
**Series 3 No.14 Summer 1999**

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<i>Sub Rates</i>	UK	Europe Air/ World Surface	World Air
<b>RP</b>	<b>£10</b>	<b>£12</b>	<b>£15</b>
<b>ICR</b>	<b>£5</b>	<b>£6</b>	<b>£7</b>
<b>Combined</b>	<b>£15</b>	<b>£18</b>	<b>£22</b>
<b>Supporters</b>	<b>£20</b>	<b>£25</b>	<b>£27</b>
<b>Institutional</b>	<b>£20</b>	<b>£25</b>	<b>£27</b>
<i>The above rates are for one year and include postage</i>			

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# Capitalism means War, Famine and Poverty

According to OECD figures, the world economy as whole is likely only to "grow" by 1.9%. This represents the worst year since 1982. Even so it overstates the case. Most of us will not see any of this "growth". The economies of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe are soon to be joined by those of Latin America in registering shrinking economic performance. On top of that the places where there is GDP growth, like the USA, are only doing so on the basis of creating greater poverty for the reserve pool of labour and through inflated share prices on Wall St. In real terms the economic crisis which has hit us since the 1970s is still eating away at capitalism.

Small wonder that imperialist rivalries are intensifying. Already the US is operating economic sanctions against states where two thirds of the world's population live. They are even threatening to increase this (see article on the trade war

on page 6). And where sanctions don't work then armed force is the consequence. We make no apology for analysing the war in Yugoslavia in some detail in this issue since it is a war nurtured by imperialist interests. We use the present tense because, for all the talk of peace military occupation of the Balkans can only mean future conflict. We should not forget too that the USA and Britain are still bombing Iraq and that every week 6,000 children there are dying because of UN sanctions. Capitalist wars today never end. Their victims are the working class everywhere.

At the same time the drain of capital back to the US and the other metropolitan countries in the so-called developed world have spelled even greater misery and starvation for the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In this issue we focus on the failure of "national liberation" to bring any improvement in living standards to Africa. Alongside

that we have translated a long contribution from a Colombian sympathiser on the devastation which the capitalist crisis US policy has created in that country. The article also shows that "social cleansing" is the Latin American version of the atrocities we have seen in ex-Yugoslavia over the last ten years. This social cleansing is carried out by US-sponsored militias.

As the US and Europe manoeuvre to dominate different areas of the planet debt relief was never very high on their real agenda. The G8 Summit in Cologne shows that capitalism not only cannot be reformed but absolutely needs to plunge ever greater numbers into poverty in order to continue accumulating.

So we now have world where barbarism is the order of the day for billions of people, where war and famine are increasing and where the leading capitalist nations are resorting more and more to force to preserve their interests. All over the world workers have been powerless to resist the policies of their national governments whether they be dictatorships or democracies.

Britain is a case in point.

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## Blair's Fantasy Island

After sucking up so hard to the USA by supporting unequivocally the bombing of Yugoslavia the Blair government has now returned to the domestic agenda. With a neat sense of timing the Asylum Bill had its first reading in Parliament. This aims to stop refugees from political oppression, like the Kosovars, getting into Britain. The promised rebellion of scores of Labour MPs did not materialise (to no-one's surprise only 7 voted against it). Meanwhile the European elections came and went with hardly anyone bothering to vote (in one working class area of Sunderland the vote was 1.6%!). Following low turnouts in the General and local elections, this non-participation of the population in elections is becoming a real worry for the bourgeoisie. Unfortunately not voting in elections only means that people realise that they have no control of the capitalist state. It does not mean that they understand how to replace it with a better system. Blair has however concluded that, if people don't participate in voting in some bourgeois

charade, what they need are ... more elections!

The devolution of some powers to Wales and Scotland was not desperately wanted by most Welsh or Scots people. But Blair's view is that by giving constitutional reform in these areas it would free up the British ruling class to offer "devolution" to Northern Ireland without it implying the break-up of the United Kingdom. The "peace" process launched by the Labour Government is based on that premise. With the help of Clinton the IRA has lost some of its financial support in the USA and this has brought Sinn Fein to the negotiations. This is how Blair was able to get his "peace process" going. Like other "peace processes" around the world it is case of the Emperor's new clothes. Since the Good Friday Agreement was signed we have had the worst bomb outrage in thirty years (Omagh) and a series of vicious sectarian murders. Blair's solution has been to get the parties together, lecture them on what they have to do to get

peace, and then announce it to the world that there will be peace in two weeks or else. And this was a few days before July 12th, the day of greatest tension in the Ulster calendar!

Blair forgets that the Ulster Protestant para-militaries were nurtured by the British state and that on the other side the hard core of the IRA see no point in giving up an armed struggle for an independent Ireland when that is what they aimed at all along. The big players in all this - the US, the Irish Government and the British Government might now agree on how they intend to share out the spoils in Ireland (or, in the British case, cut their losses). The forces they have unleashed in the past will take longer to put back into the bottle. Blair's blustering about peace is sheer fantasy. The only real peace for the workers of Northern Ireland, or Kosovo and Serbia will come with the overthrow of the bourgeois nation states which exploit and oppress them.

## Yugoslavia

# The Uneasy Peace Hides New Imperialist Rivalry

After 11 weeks of “humanitarian” bombing of Serbia we now have a “peace” which could have been signed before any ethnic cleansing or any bombing took place. The British press has called it a victory of the “stick and the carrot”. It will probably lead to the fall of the Milosevic government and the opening of the Serb economy to Western finance capital. That will be the real victory for NATO. The human costs have been born by Serbs and Kosovars. For Blair and the other NATO leaders the thousands dead don’t enter into the picture. In all this has been a war set against the backdrop of the ongoing capitalist crisis. It is because of this crisis that the “peace” will be no more than a pause before the next bloody conflict emerges.

### New Order in Europe

Let’s take stock of the international situation. The US had hoped to emphasise once again its military might and has succeeded. In particular this has been a lesson taught to and received by the Russians and the Europeans. The US had also hoped to continue to involve the Europeans in the Nato umbrella - an um-

To some extent they have also managed to do this. They have now set up bases in Bosnia, Albania, Hungary and Macedonia. These add to those acquired and still in current use to bomb Iraq following the Gulf War. They will also have a clear and forceful voice in what happens now, in the “peace” and in the reconstruction of the Balkans. They have denied the Europeans a free hand in ordering the affairs of the Balkans, a key geo-strategic area in terms of that section of the world capitalist market involving Russia, which includes the Caucasus and the Central Asian republics with all of their wealth of raw materials (including oil).

The “peace” process has only come after a great deal of argument centred upon the role of the Russians in this whole campaign. The Russians had hoped to ensure that they had an independent geo-strategic role to play. Lacking a credible military option they dispatched Chernomyrdin as envoy and peace negotiator. His role was undermined, though, by the continuing trouble Yeltsin is suffering with respect to IMF funding. The Duma is not allowing quick and easy passage of the necessary tax legislation

voicing fears for the poor of Russia. Yeltsin thus had to instruct Chernomyrdin to accept any offer put by the Americans and the Europeans. Beyond this Chernomyrdin had no apparent distance between Talbot (the American negotiator) and Ahtissari (the Finnish envoy of the Europeans) to exploit. The only concessions that could be gained were the inclusion of Russian troops in the, UN peace (or rather occupying) force, and that the question of military leadership would be tackled at a later date. The NATO alliance has looked to the UN for a banner under which to place the occupying troops so that acceptance of the deal as a whole can be wrung from both the Russians and the Chinese. This will give the role of the Americans, in particular, a world seal of approval, a world acceptance of its military policing role. It will also allow the Americans to patch up some of the recent difficulties it has had with the Chinese, over the bombing of its embassy and the revelations of Chinese stealing of military and nuclear secrets.

The Serbs under Milosevic are now being called the Yugoslavs by the media. This will allow further pressure to be put on the Montenegrins, who had hoped to remain neutral in this whole campaign. However the Montenegrin leadership is pro-US and the Western propaganda campaign during the war about Serb intentions in Montenegro has given further impetus to a possible break-up of federal Yugoslavia. A Montenegro which seeks independence is a Montenegro which can be brought either into American or European orbits, further isolating Serbia under Milosevic.

Milosevic and the Serb bourgeoisie have found that they have nowhere else to go. At the end of the war the attempts to recruit more people into its armed forces in the southern region of Serbia were met by opposition in the form of angry

One of the many Kosovan refugees killed by “friendly” NATO bombs at Korisa, Kosovo in May 1999



brella firmly in the hands of the Americans. As such they hoped to ensure the continuing and possibly further influence of the US in the affairs of Europe.

which will free the next tranche of IMF funding for the ailing Russian economy. The parliamentary blocs of Yavlinsky (Yabloko) and the “communists” are



demonstrations. Only the splits in the Serb opposition keep him in power.

This conflict has also hastened the European examination of what is called the European Defence Identity. It has shown



that the EU does not have the capacity to mount a major military offensive in key areas. It lacks the intelligence, transport and communications, alongside the front-line forces, air power etc. In a recent communiqué the EU stated that it *must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and the readiness to do so [which requires] strengthened armed forces that can rapidly react to the new risks.*

These risks are nothing other than the threats to an emerging European imperialism. It means a threat to increase arms spending, which means an increase in economic pressures on the workers of Europe. Concretely this whole process of advancing the tendency of the Europeans into an independent bloc is seen in:

- the transfer of Solana, the current Nato Secretary-General, to the post of heading the EDI;
- the tabling of the military question at the last European summit;
- the incorporation of the Western European Union into the EDI. The WEU

was formed under the Treaty of Brussels in 1948 and was, in effect, a forerunner of Nato;

- the bullying of such currently non-Nato and neutral states as Ireland, Finland, Sweden and Austria into this whole process.

This should be seen in the context of the recent further moves to centralise a whole variety of European arms contractors. The concentration of such capital will allow an easier and less expensive supply of military hardware, which is purely European, to the armed forces of Europe.

### Reconstruction?

The reconstruction that will

follow the conflict will be just as much a battle as the bombing campaign. The figures that have been bandied about for the reconstruction of the region have begun at \$30 billion. A more accurate figure probably comes from a figure from the international banking world - \$100 billion. Recently a British estimate put the costs of reconstruction for Kosovo alone at \$3.5 billion. This would seem to be

something of an under-estimate. Serbia, though, is not to be included in the programme while it remains under the leadership of Milosevic. The reconstruction process will allow two things, first of all, the gaining of contracts for reconstruction, secondly, the opportunities for further implantation of finance capital in the region as a whole. The latter will be the more heated of struggles, more than likely it will involve a cut throat competition between American and European capital. This is likely to heighten the tensions between the two possible "blocs". The Germans are still smarting from the fact that they gave huge finance to the Gulf War but got few of the contracts. They can only console themselves with the fact that the British, who licked US arses more than any other power, only got the highly dangerous contract to remove land mines in Kuwait. The US kept most of the reconstruction contracts in its own hands. This time round the Europeans are determined not to be frozen out (and Germany already has an advantage because the war has made the Deutschmark the only valid currency in the Balkans).

According to both OECD and other figures the British and German economies are set to have a lean year. Germany is on the verge of a recession, with further contraction likely in its engineering and other industries. Germany would love to be able to offset some of this by gains made in the region as a whole - as would all of the other Europeans. This will ensure that the great power rivalry which has been behind the war in Yugoslavia will intensify rather than go away....

## To RP Readers

We apologise for the lateness of this issue but it was originally completed just as the bombing of Serbia stopped. We have therefore held the issue over to update it and decided to include extra material to make it a forty page issue. Subscribers will still get the same number of issues that they paid for.

We should also explain that we have not forgotten that we should have included

the next part of the series on the German Revolution and the German Left but due to work problems the next instalment has had to be deferred. To re-assure all those who have written asking about the series we hope to resume it in RP15

As we have already announced in Internationalist Communist, we have produced a new pamphlet on Trotsky and Trotskyism. This is now at the layout stage and will shortly be printed. We are aiming to charge £2 for it but it might eventually cost more. Those ordering it now will be guaranteed the provisional price.

# Crocodile Tears for Kosovan Refugees As UK State Plans Asylum Clampdown

**O**f the 900,000 refugees displaced from Kosovo, (the majority of whom had to flee as a consequence of the NATO intervention which exacerbated the crisis), only a few thousand have been allowed to come to the UK legally. Whilst British government ministers self-righteously criticised poverty stricken Macedonia and Montenegro for not admitting enough Kosovo Albanians, although these states had already admitted hundreds of thousands, the British state graciously agreed to admit a mere 1000 Kosovan Albanians a week. Yet even this cynical gesture to the Kosovans is a massive act of generosity compared to the treatment typically meted out to asylum seekers arriving in the UK and other EC countries.

Immigration laws exist to keep out the poor. For the rich immigration control is pretty much a formality provided you've got proof of how big your bank balance is. Since the 1970s all western countries have increasingly tightened their immigration rules having no further use for cheap labour from the former colonies once the post war reconstruction ran out of steam in the late 1960s. Whilst in the 19th century it was regarded as natural and desirable for poor Europeans to seek economic betterment, (although they were often disappointed) relief from famine and refuge from Tsarist persecution in North America and Australia, those now seeking escape from the barbarism of life in most of the "third world" are now regarded as criminals in the West. The accusation levelled against asylum seekers is that they are just seeking economic advancement. Undoubtedly some are and who can blame them, but the majority who have suffered persecution will be disbelieved and have their claims refused.

In Britain legislation introduced by the Tories in 1993 and 1996 made life more difficult for asylum seekers by refusing state benefits and access to public housing for all asylum seekers who did not claim asylum immediately on arrival in the UK. (Many do not for fear of being

returned or drawing attention to what may be false documents which could lead to them being placed in detention as illegal entrants) The stated aim of the then Home Secretary Michael Howard (who, like Jack Straw, the current Home Secretary, is the son of asylum seekers from Nazi Germany) was to make life more difficult so as to deter all but "genuine" asylum seekers. By definition anyone poor is a "bogus" asylum seeker to the British Home Office. In other words the plan was to deter all but the bourgeois asylum seekers who have fallen foul of a rival bourgeois faction. However New Labour's Immigration and Asylum Bill which is set to become law in a few weeks will make Michael Howard's legislation look like the epitome of enlightened and liberal thinking. Whilst Blair and his fellow unindicted war criminals shed crocodile tears over the plight of the Kosovo Albanians, this is what they are going to do to everyone else:

- All asylum seekers will be denied welfare benefits. Instead they will receive vouchers equivalent in value to 70% of the value of income support benefit. Adults will receive an insulting £1.00 per day in cash.

- Asylum seekers will be directed to live in designated zones pending the determination of their cases. In order to cut costs it is proposed that these zones will be outside the more expensive South East of England.

- Immigration officers will be given police powers to arrest and detain. Private immigration detention centres will be given the powers to implement punishment for breach of detention centre rules.

- Children of asylum seekers will be removed from the provisions of the Children Act which places a mandatory duty on local authorities to provide essential support for children.

Instead the welfare of these children will be at the discretion of the Secretary of State.

Later this year the European Convention on Human Rights will be implemented as part of UK law. The proposals for asylum seekers is just one example of why talk of "human rights" is nothing but bourgeois humbug. World capitalism creates the system where billions of people suffer poverty and oppression, not just in the "third world" but also right in the capitalist heartlands. Capitalism cannot create "fair" or "just" immigration and asylum policies because the reason for this migration is itself rooted in the barbarism and bankruptcy of world capitalism. The immigration and asylum rules are manifestations of the callous and cynical treatment of some of the most desperate people in the world and reveals just one more reason why the working class has to create a socialist alternative to the existing world order. This means a world without national frontiers but where everyone is born into a society which satisfies human needs and where political repression and torture no longer exist.

PBD

**C.W.O.  
Public Meeting**

**War•Debt•Famine  
How to Fight the Descent  
into Barbarism**

**Swarthmore Centre,  
Woodhouse Sq.  
Leeds**

**July 14th at 7.30 p.m.**

**All Welcome**

# News from North America

Hitherto the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party has largely been made up of its two founding organisations, the CWO and the Internationalist Communist Party [Battaglia Comunista] in Italy. However in the last two years there has been increasing contact with revolutionaries (notably, but not exclusively, Scandinavia and North America). More details of these are to be found in the latest issue of our central review Internationalist Communist [£2.50 from the group address].

In North America we have had a number of sympathisers for some time who operate as Los Angeles Workers Voice and Internationalist Notes (of Wisconsin). Many of their articles have been published in previous editions of Revolutionary Perspectives. Now they are joined by the comrades of Montreal (who coincidentally also have a journal entitled Internationalist Notes). We are publishing the communiqué they sent to the last meeting of the Bureau last May. Obviously we welcome their decision to work more closely with us and we hope that our discussions will deepen our common understanding and work together, as well as ultimately cement a solid political nucleus in North America.

We are also publishing one of a series of leaflets against police violence by Los Angeles Workers Voice (an issue on which the comrades managed to campaign at the same time as fighting against the war in Yugoslavia) as well as an article taken from Internationalist Notes 19 on trade wars which neatly dovetails with the central concerns of this issue of RP that global capitalism means more violence, war and misery.

## Why Support a System that Breeds Police Brutality?

The police from the US "democratic state" are on a rampage of stepped up repression and brutality. the infamous execution-style murder of Amadou Diallo by NY cops and the recent brutal slayings of Tyisha Miller and Ricardo Close by LA cops are but tips of the iceberg. Justified anger and mass demonstrations have taken place in protest at these murders as well as a number of others. The recent growth of organised resistance to legal state terror is a sign that working people want to fight back.

But there are those forces that want to throw more banana peels in the road of the mass fighting back effectively. they tell us to leave things to the "justice system" (the bosses courts) and want to reform the thug-like tactics of the police. They hide the fact that the cops are an integral part of the capitalist government, state, city and federal. They say "the cops are not doing their job right". But they really are doing "their job". Their job is mainly to "protect and serve", that is to protect the private property of the rich and serve ruling class interests of keeping the workers in order so we can be more easily exploited and robbed by the bosses. No matter the skin colour of the cops, capitalism means more bloody assaults.

Both the Democrats and the Republicans support this unjust and exploitative social order. Their alleged concern for the victims of cop murders is all crocodile tears. Remember these are the same politicians that have been the overseers of building the mammoth prison industry. Just after Clinton took office in 1993 the number of mostly working class people and well over 50% being black and latino in prison, has grown from about 1,000,000 to 1,700,000 today. This is a 70% increase in just the last 5 years. But this too is the way the US "criminal justice system" controls large sections of the workers and this has all been mapped out by our rich rulers and their "democratic" government.

And in the "prison industry" the wages system is delivering even more "cheap labour" under prison discipline over to the tender mercies of the corporate bosses. Businesses are making more "deals" with the Prisoncrats to work the prisoners at cut rates of wages while firing large numbers of workers they had been exploiting outside the prison walls and driving down the wages of other workers.

Don't these outrages call for the build-

ing of new mass movements, ones that will attack the roots of these social problems, the profit system of waged slavery itself? Yes, we need more demonstrations and meetings, ones that lead to building mass movements and a bonafide Marxist Revolutionary Party that unites workers for struggle.

**Los Angeles Workers' Voice**

For contact with any of the groups mentioned in these two pages write to:

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**Internationalist Notes/**  
**Notes Internationalistes**  
**CP 266**  
**Succ "C"**  
**Montreal**  
**Quebec**  
**Canada**

# The Trade War Continues

[From Internationalist Notes 19]

The current trade war between the US and the EU has left the WTO looking very weak. With sanctions over the EU's trade in bananas already in effect, the WTO is hobbled by disagreements over who shall lead it and no resolution is in sight in the current trade war between EU and the US. Likewise, the US is stalling over the admission of China into the world trade body in a likely attempt to keep China from having a full role in the next round of trade talks as a WTO member. The current agenda of trade negotiations has been expanded to include human rights, labor issues and environmental protection in a cynical attempt to protect US industry and set a US dominated agenda in trade. The ruling class of the US has to act while its power is yet unchallenged to obtain the most favorable terms of trade for US based capital. The forces of world capitalism are mired deep in a crisis of their own creation, a crisis for which there are no bourgeois solutions.

US attempts to limit Russian and Japanese steel imports are another example of a defensive reaction to defend US capitalism. What one bourgeoisie calls

free trade another calls dumping. When the next economic downturn hits the US, these defensive reactions of US capitalism will likely become more pronounced. If US restrictions on imports cause such imports to be deflected off into European markets, this too could trigger a defensive counter-response from the European bourgeoisie. The US has asked the WTO to slap 200 million dollars worth of trade sanctions against the EU over beef. Canada too has joined in on behalf of North American beef producers in asking the WTO place an additional 50 million dollars worth of fines on the EU as well. The US has further responded to the EU ban on US beef by temporarily banning all imports of chicken and pork from EU countries under the pretext that some farms in Belgium have been using feed tainted with dioxin.

These conflicts are yet a further confirmation that the creation of the WTO was a symptom of the growing crisis within capitalism itself. The capitalists of the US can only take as much advantage of US imperialist muscle as possible in order to impose the most favorable terms

of trade. The expansion of US trade is a serious matter for the US ruling class, particularly in light of the massive deficit in the balance of US trade. In the much heralded economic "boom" most of the jobs created in the US today are service sector jobs. The largest numbers of positions created are for waiters and waitresses, Security Guards and Janitors, with systems analysts on the higher paying end. As economic booms go it is hardly any different from the last recession. By protecting beef, bananas and steel the ruling class is not acting to benefit US workers, rather this can only result in a temporary increase in the profitability for the capitalists and intensified exploitation of workers in the US. Any increase in profitability can only be followed by a more desperate grab for greater profits. The cracks in the edifice of the current division of the world economy become ever more apparent.

Indeed the strength of the US economy and the expansion of US power dictate that the US has a greater obligation to defend its expanding national interests. Hence, the US has to assert its military power by using all feasible methods at its disposal. In the end it can only mean further trade wars and ultimately more bloody forms of imperialist conflict.

AS

## Communiqué

**Towards internationalist revolutionary regroupment**

**A new positive development in Canada!**

13th May 1999, the members of Internationalist Notes/Notes Internationalistes, a small grouping of workers based in Montreal and drawing upon the communist left, have decided to vote and make known a resolution expressing political solidarity with the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (IBRP). The IBRP is principally made up of the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista) of Italy and the Communist Workers Organisation of Britain. It is also supported by a growing network of sympathising groups and individuals in many countries of the world; a network in which NI intends to play a very active role.

As proletarians, we wish to construct a society without money, without class and state; a society devoid of exploitation, national frontiers and permanent armies. To arrive at this, we have decided to work within the framework of activities of BIPR (IBRP) with the aim of constructing a new International

which will promote the world revolution.

Products of a rupture with bourgeois leftism, the members of NI come from various political backgrounds. For three years, we have dedicated ourselves to the study and discussion of the positions drawn from the communist left, principally but not solely those defended by the ICC and the BIPR/IBRP. Even if we do not absolutely believe that this process of clarification has come to an end, we think that we can better serve the workers' cause by an effort linked to the IBRP. That in no way will prevent the continuation of exchanges and debates with other internationalist forces. It will simply permit us to intervene from now on and in a manner more decisive and unified against the politics of capitalist exploitation (for example: the current war in the Balkans).

Our work of study, correspondence and discussion with the IBRP has brought us to the conclusion that there exists a fundamental agreement upon all the principal elements of the platform. These elements are: the necessity for the Party and the way its construction is conceived, the relations between the Party and the soviets, the determining character of the class struggle, the critique of the unions, the critique of nationalism and national lib-

eration struggles, the conception of the intervention of revolutionaries and proletarian Internationalism.

In the months to come, in continuing the publication of our bulletin and our work of discussion and debate, we will begin to publish and to circulate the political material of the IBRP. We will also discuss with the sympathisers of the Bureau in other areas with a view to consolidating and improving the presence of the Bureau in North America.

We invite proletarians in struggle against this rotten world to break with the anti-worker politics of stalinism, trotskyism, social democracy and with the anarchist cul-de-sac. Comrades, we press upon you to study the revolutionary politics of the communist left, to study the ideas and practice of your comrade workers fighting within the framework of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party or in solidarity with it.

**Our cause is just!**

**Join our ranks!**

**Workers of the world, unite!**

**Long live communism!**

Notes Internationalistes/Internationalist Notes

Montreal, 19th May 1999.



## London Bombings

# Who is the hidden enemy?

The recent bomb attacks in Brixton, Brick Lane and, most despicable of all, given the carnage that followed in the Admiral Duncan pub in Soho, have once again raised the profile of Nazi groups in Britain. Press speculation as to reasons for the bomb attacks ranged from a backlash against the Stephen Lawrence Report to blaming a lone nutter obsessed with the Internet. There is no doubt that racist attacks are

on the increase but this bombing campaign is something the far right have had not been able to organise before. Even more strangely, the far right is in total disarray at present. They have been fighting each other rather than carry out campaigns against either the Left, gays or blacks. The leader of Combat 18, Paul Sargent plus another member Martin Cross, are doing life for killing a fellow-Nazi in February 1997. What is more, it emerged at the trial that Sargent was acting as an informant on other Nazis for the British state secret services. Furthermore the police state that the suspect arrested for the bombing, David Copeland, has no connections with far-right groups yet Socialist Worker printed a picture of him behind the BNP leader John Tyndall!

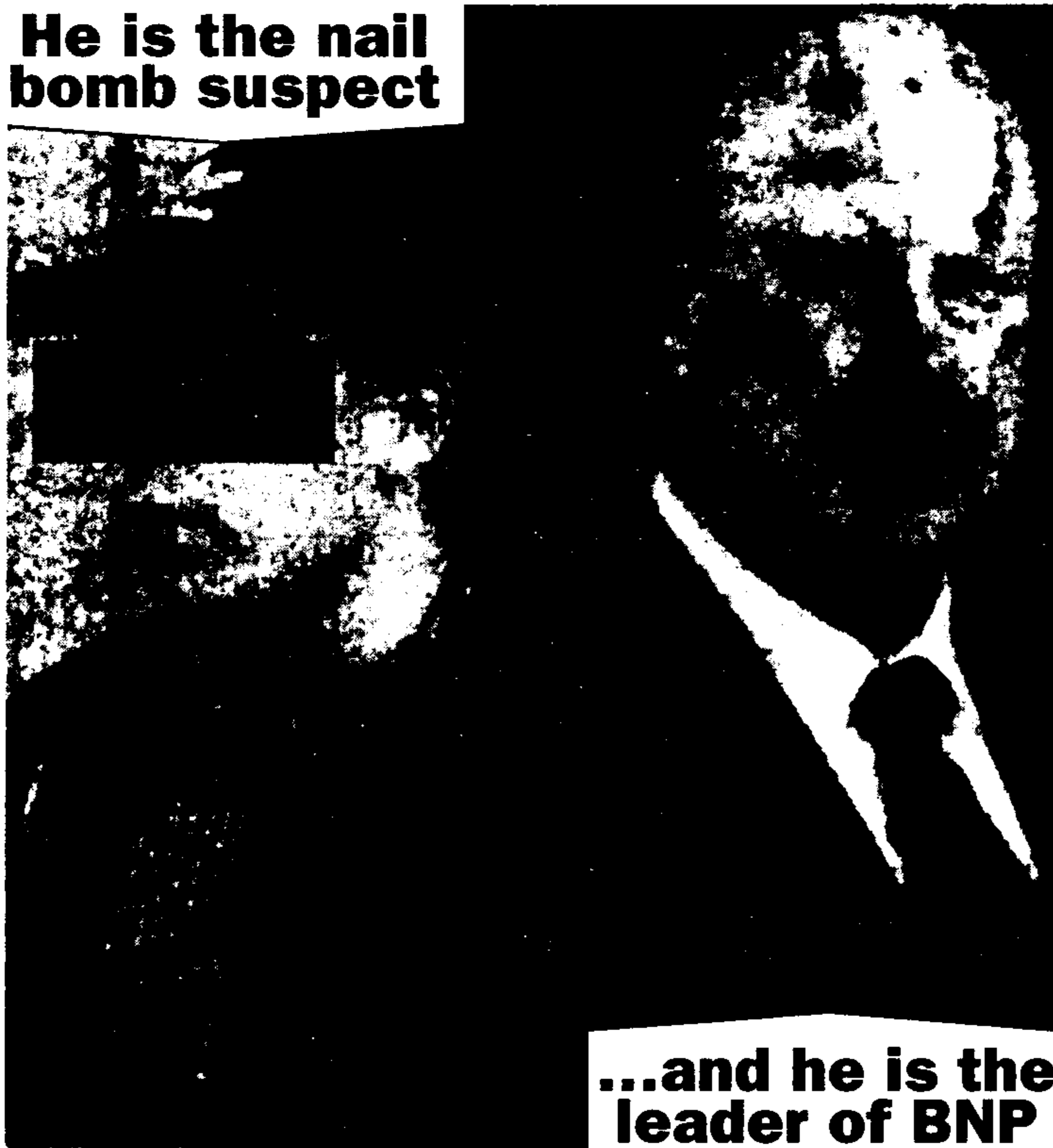
Even more mysteriously Copeland refused to leave his cell for the initial committal proceedings. Normally that means you get tried in your absence. But in his case the magistrate went and held the hearing in the prison. Why such special treatment? And why the silence from our "official" media?

### The Real Enemy

This raises the question of who was really behind the planting of the bombs. Is Copeland, like so many right-wing mem-

bers a state agent too? Without waiting to see just who had committed this barbaric crime the Socialist Workers' Party responded to the bombing by downing their anti-war placards on May Day this year to pick up their Anti-Nazi League agenda. They have run a campaign to defend "democracy" from fascism. By doing so they were probably responding in just the way the State hoped they would.

### He is the nail bomb suspect



### ...and he is the leader of BNP

This blurred picture of the London bomb suspect appeared in *Socialist Worker*. Is he also a state agent?

Do not get us wrong. There is no doubt that many far right groups feel more confident now, not because support for them is increasing, but because the working class is currently confused and demoralised after twenty years of falling wages and job cuts. This is why we have just been through a chronic period of class quiet. This gives right wing groups like the British National Party the hope that they can take advantage of the growing income gap between "rich and poor" to peddle their populist, nationalist and racist filth. It is also true that the ideol-

ogy of the extreme right and our own democratically elected Labour Government are closer than many of the liberal wind-bags pretend. The recent spate of venom directed at refugees, particularly at those who came over from Slovakia as well as Kosovo last year, showed how the Labour Party can stir up racial hatred as well as any Nazi nutter. When gypsy refugees landed in Kent the Nazis organised a campaign to keep them out. But

they merely echoed many of the arguments used by Labour, such as putting a stop to foreigners scrounging from our supposedly generous welfare system, and there were even cries of overcrowding at a time when the population of Britain is shrinking. Labour is currently putting its anti-foreigner propaganda into practice with its draconian changes to the asylum laws (see article in this issue), all the while peddling the lies that anyone seeking asylum is a scrounger, a liar and generally out to swindle the poor old "British taxpayer".

But we would like to ask who controls the bombing activity of these far right groups?

It is no accident that these foul provocations took place whilst the British state acted as the US's most strident ally in an unprecedented undeclared war against a state which had not invaded any other. It was a war to bolster a NATO alliance that had lost its Cold War meaning. In it the British Government, as in the Gulf, was the only state which was prepared to side unequivocally with the US (and ignore the UN). The timing of these bombs seem just too convenient for the British Government if it wanted to defuse criticism of its bombing policy in Yugoslavia. We are not in a position to know the organic links between the state and those who



made and planted the bombs. We can, on the other hand, understand with crystal clarity that our democratic bourgeoisie wish to divide, confuse and terrorise any proletarian opposition to their war plans.

### **New Labour, New NATO, New "Red Brigades"**

Coincidentally at the same time as the British were being terrorised by the London bombing campaign, the Italian state, in May 1999, also mysteriously rediscovered the "Red Brigades". We should remember that in the 1970s and 1980s the Red Brigades were a useful instrument for the Italian ruling class. They were finally infiltrated by the Italian secret services who ended up directing their terrorist actions. The Italian state is no stranger to provocations. In August 1978 the secret services bombed Bologna railway station killing 77 people blaming the bombings on "terrorists" who wished to undermine "democracy". All these outrages were used to justify clampdowns against all revolutionaries and to hammer home the message that only by preserving democracy (however corrupt) could the Italian working class avoid chaos.

No-one knows where this new "Red Brigade" comes from. It has already led to a witch-hunt against those who have opposed the war from an internationalist and working class perspective. This has already happened to our comrades in the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista). A newspaper in Central Italy has reported that the police are "on the trail of the Proletarian Struggle Groups and the Internationalist Communist Party". It is no surprise that they have picked out our comrades given the energy of their opposition to the war. It has forced our comrades of Battaglia Comunista to demand space in the bourgeois press to refute these lies (which are actually based on the political ignorance of a journalist who got his information from the police). We have always opposed terrorism. This is not the way to arrive at socialism. As we have said many times socialism can only be built by the mass of the class itself. Voluntarist strategies like acts of individual terror are not only unhelpful but actually undermine the self-activity of the class. This whole episode, irrespective of the lies they tell about us, is an attempt to undermine the growth of a genuine communist organisation which

has dared to raise its voice against the democratic system which is so democratically laying waste to Yugoslavia.

### **Social Democracy = Enemy of the Workers**

The bourgeoisie are thus happy to use the threat of Nazism to get the working class firmly behind the democratic banner, and groups on the left like the SWP are only too willing to help. The fight for democracy is one of the most reactionary ideologies of the century. It has been used over and over to get workers to cease class struggle and fight for the interests of the bourgeoisie. Without it would have been difficult for the British bourgeoisie to get the working class to sacrifice themselves in 1939, and it has been used to justify murderous acts of imperialism since, such as the attack on Iraq and the present attacks on Serbian (and Kosovan) workers. This of course is despite the fact that the bourgeoisie is happy to sell arms to every dictatorship going and has some very cosy relationships with some of the most brutal murderers in history. Yet they even justify this as pro - democratic. One of the arguments against deporting Pinochet was that it would harm democracy in Chile!

It is true that groups like Combat 18 or the White Wolves are the enemies of our class, and that we will have to physically defend ourselves against them as a class. But it is nonsense to expect the bourgeois state, no matter how democratic, to do this for us. The left, by calling for the defence of democracy (i.e. the democratic state) are helping to disarm the working class. Their argument that democracy is preferable to fascism or Nazism has nothing to do with Marxism. It ignores the historical fact that they are two sides of the same coin. The rise of Nazism in Germany in 1933 would have been impossible had the working class not first been defeated and its leaders murdered by the German Social Democratic Party in the years 1919-23. These brutal actions, carried out alongside many who later became Nazis, demonstrated that Social Democratic (and Labour) Parties had gone over to the property-owning classes in both war and peace. They had abandoned socialism for defence of capitalist democracy. As a result they killed the leadership of the German workers and paved the way for the rise of

Hitler a decade later.

### **Class War against Racism and Capitalist Democracy**

Today we have to get back to class politics. We cannot demand a reform of democratic state institutions like the police. The police, far from being a neutral though slightly flawed organisation as our liberals infer, are an integral part of the bourgeois state. They have a history of attacking the working class. The miners strike, the Wapping picket and the poll tax demonstration all show this. They have their own record of racist abuse including the murder of Joy Gardiner. Their attacks on protests against the far right (such as at the anti-BNP demonstration in Welling in 1993), and their much publicised "mishandling" of the Stephen Lawrence murder are just the thin end of their racist activity. They cannot be changed from being an instrument of class oppression, since it is the democratic state they defend which is the real problem.

Capitalist rule, in whatever form, is the enemy of the working class. It doesn't become any more acceptable because workers are allowed to choose which faction should exploit them next. Democracy is an invaluable tool used by the bourgeoisie when it feels strong and confident, and when it feels sure of its ideological grip on workers. It does not mean that exploitation is somehow lessened or that state violence is no longer used, as anyone who has faced the police on a picket line will testify. One type of exploitation and violence is not preferable to another. The only way to get rid of racism and oppression full stop is not to be side-tracked into defence of democracy but to unite to destroy the capitalist state. Once that is done we can then create a society without the police or the standing armies which carry out the majority of the terrorist acts in the world today. But to do that we have to first recognise who really benefitted from the London bombings...



## Yugoslavia

# Nationalism Against the Working Class

Throughout this century we have been living through the era of imperialism, "of the parasitism and decay of capitalism" [Lenin]. It is a period in which the national struggles of the bourgeoisie have only been "successful" with the hidden or open support of the major capitalist powers who dominate the world order. These imperialist conflicts may begin with local causes but they only become major catastrophes under the impetus of imperialist rivalry. In the next article we look at what the conflict tells us about present-day imperialist line-ups but here we will look at the local background to the conflict in Yugoslavia. This is an especially important task given that all factions of the capitalist class (and in this we include those Trotskyists who incite workers to support either the KLA or Serbia) are calling on us to support either one side or another in this reactionary conflict. The position we have maintained throughout all the atrocities is that of Marx "Workers have no country" and those who argue differently are trying to drag workers into imperialist war. But we need also to look at the situation as it developed in Yugoslavia once the post-war period of prosperity ended in the early seventies.

### Crisis and Class Struggle in Yugoslavia

The current crisis of world capitalism really started with the end of the period of post-war economic expansion at the beginning of the 1970s. It hit Tito's Yugoslavia particularly hard since most of its borrowings had been with foreign banks who had funded economic investment. In the period 1953-64 this had been no problem as Yugoslav GNP grew at a rate of 8.6% p.a. but by 1973 (in common with other states) this was falling (the 1974-89 average was 2.8%). There was a false dawn as GNP growth rates rose for a few years after 1974 but only at the cost of massive borrowing and a doubling of the unemployment

rate to 14.2% (and this in a supposedly "socialist" country!). Worse was to follow after the death of Tito (in 1980). The gradual decline and eventual collapse of Yugoslavia's traditional markets in Eastern Europe increased the economic misery. The Yugoslav ruling class tried to print money to increase investment. By 1989-90 this had led to an inflation rate of 2000% per year. Thousands of factories were closed, throwing another one and half million out of work. Unemployment was now 25% of the economically active population.

In response to this the Yugoslav working class began to resist the misery that was being thrust upon them. There were 1,700 strikes involving millions of workers demanding better wages and no job losses. This wave of class struggle threw the Yugoslav Communist Party ruling class into a panic. Its grip on power was threatened because the thirty year lie that the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was a self-managed socialist state was now shattered.

### Enter Imperialism

At this point the leading figures in the richer states, Slovenia and Croatia, now began to assert that they would be better off out of the Federal Peoples Republic. This would not have come to anything (given that 80% of the JNA - the Yugoslav Army's officers were from Serbia and Montenegro) if it had not been for interference of the Great Powers. At the beginning the main actor was Germany. Fresh from the success of the re-unification of their territory, the German ruling class prepared to renew the "Drang nach Osten" (Drive to the East) of German imperialism in the last century. It first took the form of encouraging the Slovene and Croat ruling cliques to secede from Yugoslavia. Then in December 1991 the Kohl Government bounced the other EU countries into recognising Croatian independence. The British (who supported their traditional

allies in Serbia) warned that

*if they recognised Croatia and Slovenia then they would have to ask all the others whether they wanted their independence. And that if they asked the Bosnians whether they wanted their independence, they inevitably would have to say yes, and this would mean a civil war [in Bosnia].*

Lord Carrington, quoted in L. Silber and A. Little *The Death of Yugoslavia* p.220

This prediction was only too true but the conflicts in former Yugoslavia would not have become the humanitarian disasters we have seen if it had not been for the different rival interests of the great powers. It is a fact that nationalist ideology in the ex-Yugoslav Republics was at first surprisingly unsuccessful despite the nationalists' control of the media. Workers have never universally followed the flags of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. It was a conflict imposed upon them by a minority of ruling class politicians desperate to hang on to power. Hundreds of thousands of young workers on all sides have evaded conscription in this Balkan War whilst some of the conflicts have been started only through the provocations of local politicians. For example, it was some of Tudjman's own ministers who provoked the war in Slavonia. They had to personally carry out a mortar attack on the Yugoslav Army barracks in Sisak since they could not find a Croat militia to do it for them. The local Croat police chief who tried to prevent their murderous intentions was himself later murdered. This was no isolated incident. Whenever Yugoslavs have managed to talk to western newsmen away from the ears of the militias (of all sides) they have denounced the war and some have even stated that it was being forced on them by the "extremists" in the various ruling elites. The wars in Yugoslavia are above all wars of rulers against people, of the ruling class against the working class. As various factions in Britain (Benn and Alice



Mahon and the Socialist Workers Party) have called for support for Serbia whilst others from Blair's New Labour apparatchniks to Workers Power and other entryist groups have supported the Kosovo Liberation Army, it is necessary to understand the historical reality behind the catastrophe in Yugoslavia. The truth is that as this is an imperialist conflict over a state descending into barbarism. No "side" is worth the support of the working class.

### **The Serb Nationalist "Memorandum"**

To return to ex-Yugoslavia, Tito, who had led the "partisans" to victory in 1945, died in 1980. The event was greeted in Kosovo with a demonstration of hundreds of thousands of students for greater autonomy. The Serb response was a police crackdown. A year later there were more demonstrations in Kosovo demanding that Kosovo's autonomy status be extended to that of a republic inside the Yugoslav federation. The Serb minority (10% of the population) in Kosovo now began to claim that they were being discriminated against by Kosovan officials. The Serb Orthodox Church issued an "Appeal for the Protection of the Serbian Inhabitants and their Holy Places in Kosovo" in 1982. More Serb nationalist demands followed including a "Memorandum" drawn up by the Serbian Academy of Sciences. This "Memorandum" has since become the programme of the Serbian nationalist ruling class. At first it was attacked by the old Titoist leadership of Stambulic but in December 1987 he was overthrown and replaced by Milosevic. Milosevic had never either supported or denounced the "Memorandum" but all his subsequent actions (which are the actions of a frightened Serb ruling class) have been within its terms.

The Memorandum itself claims that under Tito the Serbs were discriminated against (Tito's Croat origins are emphasised every time the Serb nationalists refer to him by his real name of Josip Broz). The nationalists argue that Croatia and Slovenia were favoured for economic development which is why they are richer than Serbia today (in fact they were richer than Serbia even when they were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before 1918). The Memorandum argues that Bosnia (or rather most

of it) is Serb as is Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo. All Serbians have a right to live in a centralised state in which the claims of other groups are not be taken into account. It even prepares the Serbs to accept "ethnic cleansing" if this can achieve a purer Serb state. With this programme Milosevic has won the support of the old state bureaucracy, Serbian peasants and the Orthodox Church. This has enabled him to hold on to power in three elections (albeit with diminished votes each time). Contrary to the Blair lie that Milosevic is a dictator, he is in fact the leader of a coalition government. Moreover his party is crucially dependent on the votes of two even more extreme Serb nationalist parties. One of these the Radical Party of Seselj is basically fascist. Seselj himself is personally responsible for much of the genocide committed in the name of Serb nationalism. Milosevic is constantly opposed by the urban middle class (who want to let the IMF dictate a programme of privatisation of state industries - 80% of which are bankrupt) but despite the reduction in the majority of Milosevic's Socialist Party he has been able to cling on to power by forming the coalition with the nationalist parties. The working class as a whole supports neither but has no independent programme of its own.

Armed with The Memorandum as his programme Milosevic finally accepted the disintegration of the old Yugoslav state and declared Serbian secession from the old Yugoslav Federation in March 1991.

Kosovo had already lost its autonomy by 1990. Just how rigidly Milosevic accepts the ethnic cleansing implicit in the Memorandum came with the Dayton accords. Here he gave up Krajina to Croatia as part of the deal to formally partition Bosnia. The subsequent brutal forcing of hundreds of thousands of Serbs from their homes in Croatia was a sight which cost Milosevic some of his nationalist support. Some argue Serbia aimed to partition Kosovo. It would then retain the northern, mineral-rich part which then would be settled with Serbs displaced from Slavonia and Krajina. However as Milosevic rarely makes policy statements this was simply conjecture on the part of those seeking to find some rationale for the policy of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Contrary to the Blair myth, ethnic cleansing is not

uniquely Serb. It has a long and dishonourable history in the Yugoslav lands.

### **Kosovo**

During the Second World War the Nazis overran Yugoslavia. Kosovo was detached from Serbia and handed over (with Western Macedonia) to a newly enlarged "Greater Albania" under Mussolini's Italian Fascists. Between April 1941 and October 1944 nearly all Serb and Montenegrin inhabitants of Kosovo were massacred by the Bali Kombhtar (an Albanian fascist/nationalist organisation at first working with the Blackshirts of Mussolini, and then after his fall, with the German SS). Few Serbs were able to return to Kosovo after World War Two and according to the 1991 census only 10% of the Kosovo population were of Serb origin.

Once the war was over Albania shrunk back to the boundaries established by the Treaty of London of 1913. This only confirms how "the Albanian question" only exists because of imperialist rivalry in the Balkans. Indeed Albania came into being because Serbia was the main victor in the Second Balkan War of 1912-13. As Serbia was a client of Russia, Britain and Austria insisted that the former Turkish province of Albania on the Adriatic be given its own state in order to prevent further Serbian (and therefore Russian) expansion. This was no victory for the so-called "self-determination of nations" since nearly half of all Albanians were outside Albania, the majority of these being in Kosovo.

When the Stalinists under Enver Hoxha took over in 1945 they accepted the original boundaries of Albania (partly out of fear of Stalinist Russia, partly because Tito's Yugoslavia initially had the support of both Western imperialism and Stalin). In the early years of the Tito regime there was a harsh crackdown on Albanians in Kosovo led by Interior Minister Alexander Rankovic.

However by 1974 the economic crisis was beginning and Tito needed political solutions. The first of these was to loosen the Yugoslav Federation. Kosovo and Vojvodina were given greater autonomy. For the first time Albanians virtually ran the province. However by the time of Tito's death unemployment in Kosovo had risen to 50% and the Kosovo GDP had fallen from 47% of the



Yugoslav average in 1947 to 24%. By 1980 Serbs in Kosovo were already protesting against discrimination. These demonstrations were, however, small and at first not supported by any significant political force inside Serbia proper. However once it became clear to the Serb ruling class that working class resistance throughout Yugoslavia threatened their future control of the state then they began to play the nationalist card. Milosevic became the nationalists' spokesman. On June 28th, 1989 he gave his now famous speech to the one million Serbs bussed into Gazimestan in Kosovo. The speech was supposed to "celebrate" the defeat 600 years earlier of the Serbian Prince Lazar by the Ottoman Emperor Murad on "the Field of Blackbirds" (Kosovo Polje). Milosevic told the crowds

*Six centuries later again we are in battles and quarrels. They are not armed battles though such things should not be excluded yet.*

As he spoke there was more than one commentator who noted that there was a more significant anniversary. On the same day in 1914 a Yugoslav nationalist had assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne and his wife. Those were the first two shots of the First World War....

Since Milosevic's speech we have seen wars in four of the six former Yugoslav republics. Ominously the interference of the world's dominant powers has become more obvious with every new round of conflict.

For the Kosovars in the early 90s it meant the dissolution of the Kosovar parliament. The teaching of the Albanian language was also banned and over 150,000 Albanian speakers lost their jobs in the civil service and state industries. Persecution of Albanians was begun in an attempt to make them leave the country. Unemployment amongst Albanian speakers rose to 80%.

The Kosovan response was at first very muted. Lacking the support of a major imperialist power they initially supported the parallel institutions set up under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova. These included a parliament which was not recognised by Serbia, as well as Kosovan universities, schools and hospitals. The finance largely came from the 400,000 strong Albanian community in the United States as well as other exiled

Kosovans in Europe. Rugova, a university academic and writer, is also a member of one of the leading Albanian landowning clans. He and his LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo) government were given assurances by the USA that if the Kosovans were patient throughout the war in Bosnia then the Kosovan issue would be settled at the peace talks.

In fact the very opposite occurred. In order to achieve the Dayton Accords with Milosevic the issue of Kosovo had to be left out of the discussion by the USA. As we predicted at the time this was a pseudo-peace (see After the Balkan War, the Imperialist "Peace" in Revolutionary Perspectives 1) which would be followed by further bloody conflicts. Rugova's hopes collapsed at Dayton and Milosevic had a free hand to carry on repression in Kosovo. This in turn led to the rise of the UCK (or KLA in English).

### The KLA: Pawn of Imperialism

The precursors of the KLA have existed for many years. Originally most were Maoist supporters of Enver Hoxha's Stalinist regime in Albania. Gradually however they have dropped the Stalinist ideology to take on a largely Islamic fundamentalist stance. After its founding in 1992 the KLA was at first only notable for its murders of Serb refugees in Bosnia but gradually the disillusion with the Rugova strategy amongst both the clan chiefs in Kosovo and amongst Albanian exiles in the US and Europe has led them to become the dominant force in the Kosovan community. Their other big breakthrough was the collapse of the Bereisha regime in Albania since the rioting that followed led to cheap weapons flooding north to the guerrillas. Bereisha had discreetly supported them in 1996 but, after his fall from power, in 1997 he put his Tropoja estate at their disposal. The US military attache to Albania has been seen in this training camp on more than one occasion.

However it was Germany, as usual amongst the great powers, who took the lead in arming and supporting the KLA (they use West German Army uniforms and East German weapons no longer needed by the new German state). The KLA however was short of cash for better weapons and has received a good deal from organised crime amongst the

Albanian diaspora.. The programme of the KLA is now to "free" all Albanians wherever they live (the mirror image of the Serbian Memorandum). They aim to take territory from Montenegro and Macedonia (which is 30% Albanian speaking). This is one reason why the US has been reluctant to back them (and indeed right up to the eve of Rambouillet Albright was denouncing them as terrorists).

Another reason why the USA was against them was that they had already murdered the leader (Ahmet Krasniqi) of an alternative liberation army loyal to both Rugova and the USA in Tirana last September. The fact that there is now no alternative to the KLA (who bump their Kosovan rivals off regularly) means that the US is forced to use them, albeit warily.

It was the KLA who provoked the current fighting when they began their offensive in September 1997. Within 5 months the KLA controlled 30% of Kosovo. The Serbs responded by killing 80 Albanian civilians at Drenica - the worst atrocity before the NATO bombing began. However the offensive also allowed the KLA to show that it specialises in ethnic cleansing too. During this time they began to attack not only Serbs but also Roma (gypsies) and Gorani (Islamicised Albanian-speaking Slav) communities. Even Kosovans were not safe if they opposed such policies.

*...the KLA harass or kidnap anyone who comes to the police...KLA representatives had threatened to kill villagers and burn their homes if they did not join the KLA ...KLA harassment has reached such intensity that residents of six villages in the Stimlje region are "ready to flee".*

From the daily reports of the US element of the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission December 21st, 1998 (US State Department)

The Serb reprisals forced the KLA immediately on the retreat (with the Kosovan villagers paying the price - a deliberate part of KLA tactics to make the Serbs hated by the Kosovans). 800 people died and 150,000 were displaced by this fighting in which 300 villages were destroyed. In October 1998 the US envoy, Richard Holbrooke persuaded Milosevic to withdraw his troops and allow in UN observers to monitor "the peace". Under this protection the KLA moved into Kosovo in even larger num-



bers and the Serbs once again responded. In December the fighting was once again in full swing. The NATO powers now denounced Milosevic for going back on his promise to withdraw, without mentioning that the KLA had made huge gains under the noses of the so-called international peace-keeping observers. However the final crunch came in January this year with the al-

leged massacre of the villagers of Racak by Serb forces. We say alleged because the Serbs claim that this was a shoot-out between the Serbian Special police and the KLA. The evidence that the USA used was that of the US-head of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) observer teams, William Walker. He pointed to some bodies in civilian clothes in a ditch in the

village the day after the supposed massacre. Since then we have learned that Walker was a US agent supplying the contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s. Independent accounts by Associated Press, Le Figaro and Le Monde all claim that the village was deserted before the so-called massacre. No matter - the NATO powers now had their casus belli and the Serbs were summoned to account...

## Another Imperialist War in the Balkans

*The US seems to have two policies.*

*One is to work with its erstwhile allies to keep the conflict under control. The other, if it fails, is to promote the dismemberment of the Milosevic state. It is a dangerous game which will bring only more death and misery.*

*Kosovo: A Hunting Ground for Nationalism and Imperialism, A Graveyard for the Working Class in **Revolutionary Perspectives 11** (Summer 1998)*

A cluster bomb releases 140 land mines over an area up to 100 acres. The aim is to maim people. Missiles tipped with depleted uranium warheads cause leukaemia and deformities in, as yet unborn, babies. No one yet knows the consequences of graphite bombing of electrical facilities. These are the means that NATO uses to fight its "humanitarian" war not just in Serbia, but also in Kosovo.

The torrent of lies that has poured out of the media of the NATO countries has hardly been interrupted by the odd honest voice. Robert Fisk in the Independent might have told the truth about the NATO massacre of Kosovan refugees near Djakovica on April 14th and John Pilger might have tried to point out what NATO's real war aims are but these have been lone voices. Even now when a "settlement" has been reached the lying goes on. The Financial Times tells us that "it was worth it", though they may have been referring only to the rise in share prices of Western arms manufacturers

It is a self-evident truth that NATO did not engage in the bombing campaign in Yugoslavia to save any oppressed people. If that had been any part of its agenda then the Kurds, the Palestinians, the Greek Cypriots or the East Timorese would have long ago got such aid. Even

if it had been then all we can conclude is that it had been a total disaster for the population of Kosovo. A low-level guerrilla war became genocidal ethnic cleansing once the NATO bombers went in. The Serb nationalists who control the Special Police, like the KLA, have no restraints. We have all seen the misery of hundreds of thousands both Serb and Kosovar, violently forced from their homes. Now that NATO have arrived in Yugoslavia liberal optimists might have expected that the NATO troops would prevent the process of Serbs being ethnically cleansed but nothing of the sort has taken place. Now it is the Serb inhabitants of Kosovo who are leaving the province. And yet the British press talk of a new humanitarian role for NATO. What they really mean is a new humanitarian justification for imperialist war.

Whilst every war has local causes the real reason [see previous article] why they are so devastating in our epoch is due to the interference of the great powers - who have their own imperialist interests to look after. What we have seen in Yugoslavia is NATO interference in a guerrilla campaign such as been waged in Northern Ireland, the Basque country of Spain and many other parts of Europe in the last quarter century. In no case has it been suggested that bombing London or Madrid would "solve" the Irish or Basque questions. What we are witnessing is a war of a decaying social system. Capitalism's "highest phase", imperialism, which opened at the beginning of this century means that every area of the planet is a potential battleground for the great capitalist powers who try to divert the financial flow of capital to their own territories. Today, the end of the Cold War means that we have a new situation, unique in history, where a single power, albeit a continental one has an overwhelming

preponderance throughout the world. However the end of the Cold War was not, as some US State Department thinkers claimed "the end of history". Nothing ever stands still and US dominance does not go unchallenged. At first the US ruling class thought that all it had to do was to preserve the status quo of 1990 and it would automatically benefit from huge economic gains. However the reality that there was no status quo has led to a shift in US policy. It is now one of active intervention to defend their world order. Nowhere was this shift more evident than in the former Yugoslavia.

### Rambouillet

The fact that the US and its closest allies had decided to remove the Milosevic regime can be seen in the negotiations at Rambouillet. The Rambouillet agreement was not published in full before the war started. As it was the actual cause of the NATO air strikes you would have thought that everyone should have seen it. But a cursory glance at the actual details of this so-called Accord shows that the NATO powers aimed at nothing less than the total extinction of the Milosevic regime.

The Rambouillet accord proper is concerned with Kosovan autonomy and the stationing of an international peacekeeping force in Kosovo which is under NATO command. This is all that Blair, Robertson, Cook, Livingstone, Short et al have ever referred to when justifying the NATO actions. It is on this basis that the British Government have been able to maintain the lie that this is only a humanitarian mission. However the accord has a series of Appendices which show what NATO really aimed at.

Appendix B grants NATO freedom of



movement not just in Kosovo but "throughout all Yugoslavia". Article 8 of the same Appendix goes on to say

*NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [FRY] including associated airspace and territorial waters.*

In other words NATO intended a take-over of the entire country!

At the same time NATO would be beyond the law of the land they were occupying.

*NATO personnel, under all circumstances and at all times shall be immune from the Parties' jurisdiction in respect of any civil administrative, criminal or disciplinary offences which may be committed by them in the FRY.*

Article 10 further reveals some of the real war aims.

*NATO is granted the use of airports, roads, rail and ports without payment of fees, duties, tolls or charge. The economy shall function in accordance with free market principles.*

No wonder no British paper has printed it! Only John Pilger managed to get a few lines of it into the New Statesman and a letter about it in the Guardian. There has been no "accord" like this since the Second World War. Apparently this Appendix was only inserted on the last day of the negotiations after the Serbs had already agreed to sign the original text. No wonder the Serb parliament refused to accept it.

The KLA also refused to sign at first. At Rambouillet the 29 year old KLA leader Hashim Thaci announced that a new Kosovan Government had "been set up" to replace the autonomist Ibrahim Rugova and that he was its Prime Minister. This represented a turning point in US relations with the KLA. It was no coincidence that it was on US insistence the KLA was now installed at the head of the Kosovan delegation. Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, still took almost a month to persuade the KLA that accepting the Agreement (which gave them only autonomy not independence) would put the Serbs in such a corner that the Kosovan nationalists would get their

aims eventually anyway. Apparently she told them that there would be a plebiscite on independence in Kosovo within three years. As a reward supplies flowed to the KLA. It had had only a few hundred men fifteen months before the bombing began. Miraculously it now claims an army of 50,000. The heavy weapons it so conspicuously lacked before the NATO bombings have now magically appeared. Shoulder-held anti-tank rocket launchers, mortars, automatic assault rifles and even anti-aircraft machine guns are now part of their arsenal. Talk of their supervised disarmament by NATO is just hypocrisy.

### NATO and Imperialism

On March 24th 1999, six days after the KLA signed Rambouillet, NATO began the bombing of Serbia. It is the first time in its fifty year history NATO has acted collectively against another power. The war in Yugoslavia tears up the final links with the post-war settlement of 1945. NATO was formed in 1949 as a defensive alliance against attack from the USSR. Yet Serbia has committed no act of aggression outside its own borders (and the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo only really began after the bombing started). NATO's bombing means that it is now redefining itself as an instrument for US interference around the world.

It also had another purpose. By dragging the Europeans into bombing a European state the US were trying to prevent a European bloc forming without them. Prior to the bombing the Europeans had been discussing some form of military cooperation for Europe without the USA. It would seem that the idea of accepting US dominance has won since the alliance formally stuck together (despite Greek protests, and German, Czech and Hungarian refusal to send troops in the event of a ground war). This situation remains unresolved. The Europeans are currently proposing a new military organisation headed by Javier Solana, the current Secretary-General of NATO. This has the support of the US since it would be no threat to their control of the European domain. However the whole episode could yet backfire on the US. NATO's purpose is still in question in Europe and the next few years will see whether European defence develops in a pro-American or anti-American direction.

One of the key issues in the Balkans is the struggle for control of raw materials. In the case of the Balkans this means control of oil routes. Currently there are several schemes competing to bring oil and gas from the Caspian region via the Caucasus to Europe. One of the proposed routes for such a pipeline would be through the former Yugoslavia. The fact that Europe would be the main beneficiary and the fact that the US by establishing permanent bases in Bosnia, Macedonia (where 10,000 US troops have been stationed for a decade) means that there is plenty of grounds for rivalry in the years ahead.

Further afield, the bombing has justified further instability and danger in the world "order". India has openly stated that the NATO bombings are a green light to further conflict in the East. The Indian nationalist government, which is tottering, has used the crisis to escalate the war with Pakistan in Kashmir. We have also seen during the current crisis how US-China rivalries are going beyond trade wars. The Chinese have been refused a US telecommunications satellite in case the Chinese Army can use it. The Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was "mistakenly" selected for bombing by the CIA provoking China back into the arms of the Russians. It was notable that Chernomyrdin went to Beijing before he discussed his "peace" plan with NATO. These are all indicators which point to a wider conflict in the future. And it will not just be Kosovans and Serbs who will be suffering then.

The global economic crisis is creating an increasingly desperate scramble for power and influence. Sometimes the rationality for it is at first sight difficult to detect because imperialism creates for itself its own logic. Struggles take place to prevent rivals occupying territories which might lead to future gains. This has always been a feature of imperialist rivalry. For example, some anti-Marxist historians argue that the scramble for colonies before the First World War could not have had economic motives since only India made any serious profits for the British. The German colonies always ran at a loss. These facts are true but are based on an immediatist, shop-keeper logic. The calculations of the imperialist in Germany, France, Britain, even the USA before 1914 were that colonies were investments for the future. To not have them was to be permanently



"out of the game". Today the imperialist imperative lies in playing ball with the US. The other NATO powers want to place at the conference table in case the pickings go to their rivals. Hence they all sought to make their contributions to the NATO campaign whatever reservations and doubts they may have had about the outcome or played a double game as France did by sending back Serb draft evaders to Milosevic!).

To return to the current "settlement", one fact is clear and that is that NATO was as relieved to sign it as Milosevic. The NATO countries did not expect the Serbs to withstand such a lengthy bombing campaign. Despite all their experiences with Iraq (which is still bombed almost daily) the NATO powers expected an early surrender. This was quite clear from the words of the British Defence Secretary. On March 25th he announced that NATO's aim was "clear-cut" to

*avoid an impending humanitarian catastrophe by disrupting the violent attacks currently being carried out by the Yugoslav security forces against the Kosovan Albanians.*

On Radio 4 a few days later, when it was clear that bombing Serbia had led to brutal and desperate acts as thousands of Kosovans were ejected by the Serb special police, and again, on HMS Invincible on April 30th Robertson denied that it was ever NATO's intention to prevent a "humanitarian disaster". Now NATO apologists argue that preventing ethnic cleansing was the "noble" motive for the bombing! If that was the case why didn't the Defence Minister know about it! Robertson's denials on this issue were the only true words he or his Cabinet colleagues spoke throughout the war!

NATO's original plan failed and preparations for ground troops were obviously being made when Chernomyrdin and Martti Ahtisaari, the President of Finland took their scheme to Belgrade. The Serb agreement to withdraw from Kosovo was a great relief to the NATO powers because a land war would have been fraught with new consequences.

The First World War really got underway because Russia simply refused to back down on its promise to protect fellow Slavs in Serbia. Currently the Russian government is ridiculed in its own land

(and was replaced yet again in the course of the bombing campaign). At the moment Russia is militarily weak and therefore can only try to act as an intermediary to obtain a cease-fire (or find a face-saving formula for the Serb leadership). If Chernomyrdin had failed then NATO was left with only invasion. In that event the nationalist cries emanating from Moscow could have become shouts. Even now the Russian nationalists of both ex-Stalinist and proto-fascist shades are calling Chernomyrdin a Western stooge who has betrayed the Slavs. In the event of these forces taking over in Russia they would find that the Army which is in deep crisis was too weak to do anything against the might of NATO. The only thing which Russia still possesses from its super-power days are its stockpiles of nuclear weapons. The war in Yugoslavia could have had dire consequences for humanity.

There are still serious problems ahead. Despite the headlines in the British press about "Slobba Clobber" (The Sun) the Ahtisaari/Chernomyrdin Plan is actually less onerous on Serbia than the official Rambouillet Accord. It does not, for example, state that NATO will control the UN force that will occupy Kosovo. It certainly does not contain a military annex which allows the US and its Allies to takeover the economic and military control of Yugoslavia. This is why the Serb parliament could vote for it.

The question now arises as to why the NATO side was so keen to bomb Belgrade and then settle for a solution which was less than they wanted? The first part of the answer we have already given. The bombing campaign alone has failed and the whole question of the NATO alliance would have come under threat. Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia had all stated that they would not be part of an invasion force in Kosovo or Serbia. In other words the US plan to disrupt European moves towards a bloc might have completely backfired.

Western politicians may find that Milosevic does not last long but for reasons which may be less palatable than they imagine. Already the proto-fascist and genocidal Radical Party of Seselj has opposed signing a deal with NATO - it is a severe blow to the Milosevic coalition. But if Serbia is in a state of confusion the possibilities for further conflict in Kosovo are enormous. The

KLA were told by NATO to "exercise restraint" after the UN occupied Kosovo, but Serbs in Kosovo are being ethnically cleansed themselves under the eyes of the NATO troops.

This is only the beginning of new conflicts. The KLA's programme also calls for unity with Albanians everywhere including in Macedonia where 30% of the population are Albanian. If NATO does attempt to hamper or halt the KLA then it might even be a case of NATO fighting the KLA to maintain what little shred of integrity it has left. One thing is clear. Kosovo, like Bosnia, like Macedonia will come under permanent US (sometimes posing as UN) occupation. The US have already built the biggest military complex in Europe in Bosnia and its troops have now been in Macedonia for ten years. Under the present phase of imperialism countries like Yugoslavia are attacked (without formal declaration of war) and then continually impoverished by a continuing war. In Iraq 6000 children a week are still dying due to UN sanctions over a war that began in 1990. These wars are now a permanent feature of capitalism. Imperialism was lucky this time that it did not plunge into a deeper war of untold consequences. There is no guarantee that the next time (and there will always be a next time) the consequences are not greater. If the US continues its policy of divide and rule against its former allies then there will come a point when new blocs will be formed and pave the way for a wider conflict.

In the meantime more "local" wars will take place. In the last resort it is the capitalist system of exploitation that is always the cause of them. It is the continuing battle between the richest and most powerful states for control of the resources of the planet that are bringing misery and death to populations around the planet. The truth is that we are living under a social system which is decaying. Its only solution will come when the main victims of the massacres - the international working class - take control of their own lives and destroy the system of profit and greed which underlines all these wars. Either that or capitalism will plunge us into a barbarism which will make Kosovo look like a very small humanitarian disaster. Socialism or barbarism - there is no third road.

AD



# Why Was the Opposition to the War in Yugoslavia So Weak?

**T**he (undeclared) war in Yugoslavia shows just how totalitarian all so-called democratic capitalist regimes have become. The USA, Britain and the other NATO countries all started bombing a state which had not broken the UN Charter by committing an act of aggression outside its own borders. Yet there was hardly a word out of place in the supposedly "free" British press. The state here doesn't need press censorship when the press publishes virtually only what the NATO leaders want to hear. When Blair complains that Serbian TV is censored or that Milosevic is a dictator he only draws attention to his own domination in Britain (and NATO showed just how high they ranked the propaganda war when they bombed the studios of Serb TV in Belgrade). It is not surprising to find therefore that the original Rambouillet demands also included the access of NATO to Serb broadcasting

Ever since they mistakenly allowed us to see the Vietnam War on television capitalist states have realised that controlling the flow of information about war is more important than the arguments for starting it in the first place. In the Falklands and Gulf Wars the TV news was heavily censored and Kosovo was no different. As NATO had a preponderant military power the real war was fought by the media.

For workers back in Britain the situation has been reminiscent of Orwell's 1984. Wars are fought in some remote zone of the planet (although Kosovo is less than a 1000 miles as the crow flies) and citizens have to pay careful attention to the media to remember which is the enemy power. Last week it was Iraq, this week it is Serbia etc. "Slobba" like Saddam was once our friend but now we learn he has always been a crafty monster (except that before "we" supported him because "we" thought he would give us access to Balkan markets and resources).

All this one dimensional media coverage obviously goes a good way to explain

why most working class people did not realise that this was a war against the working class - both Kosovan and Serbian. This explains too why the opposition to the war was so poorly supported. At first sight Greek workers put up the most effective resistance. Greek sailors "mutinied" rather than join the NATO flotilla whilst transport workers refused to move NATO supplies from Piraeus and Salonika. However, when we remember that the Greek ruling class has huge investments in Serbia (which were depreciating rapidly under the hail of NATO bombs on Belgrade) and is also Serbia's main Balkan ally, then these movements lose their independent class character.

Next most dramatic were the Italian demonstrations in Rome and at Aviano (the NATO airbase) which were the biggest in any country involving up to 100,000 people. At the same time there was even something approaching a general strike in Italy called by the rank and file unions (the COBAS). Nothing like this was seen anywhere else but then Italy is right next door to the Balkans and was the main launch pad for NATO attacks. We should also make it clear that the one day strike was not really supported by the working class as a whole but by the most politically committed although, according to the reports of our comrades of Battaglia Comunista, a few workers independently joined the demonstrations.

In France and the USA the anti-war movement has been almost non-existent. The French government were even able to repatriate Serbs to Belgrade who had fled to Paris to avoid military service without opposition! In the USA demonstrations have largely been in their hundreds in each city rather than thousands. Even then, as in many other places including Britain there has been a fair smattering of Serb nationalists in these demonstrations.

In Britain there have been a couple of

demonstrations of around 5000 or so (despite the claims of the organisers that they were much bigger) in London and much smaller demonstrations involving a few hundred in provincial cities like Manchester, Glasgow and Manchester.

## **A Non-Proletarian Agenda**

All these bits of news show that the biggest weakness of the opposition to the war throughout the world was the almost total absence of the working class. In fact we could say that the current domination of capitalist thinking over everyday life would not be possible if the working class were more active. If we were fighting for our own issues, starting with decent pay, decent social provision and better working conditions then the state would have to look over its shoulder at the class war back home. The united offensive of the bosses and the state against the working class on the economic front has given the capitalists the confidence to hit workers in the Balkans with the ultimate attack - imperialist war.

This is why it was important to link the war with all the other attacks we have had to face over the last few years. It was a challenge taken up by internationalists of the Communist Left. It was not taken up by the traditional Left.

## **"Socialists" for Imperialism**

We can perhaps leave aside the Labour Party and the trades unions. The so-called Labour Movement has a long and dishonourable history from the First World War onwards of supporting the British Empire and then "the nation" in imperialist war. In the First World War the unions signed up to no-strike deals to aid the war effort. After 1945 it was the Attlee Government which developed the British nuclear war capacity and it was Harold Wilson who gave the US support during the Vietnam War. Those who point out that Labour has always had a pacifist minority from Keir Hardie



through to Christian Socialists like Wedgwood-Benn are not only trying to find an alibi for Labour but also underlining that the Labour mainstream (whether New or Old) has always put nation before class. Blair's statements about "ethical" foreign policy about a fight "for values not territory" are no different from the same sentiments that imperialists always mouth. Britain went into the First World War proclaiming its motive as defence of Belgium when everyone knows it wanted to smash the new German Navy which was the only threat to Britannia ruling the waves at the time. Blair was in this war to get the crumbs from Clinton's cake just as Thatcher and Major joined with Bush to hammer Iraq nine years ago. This is why the Leftist groups like the Socialist Workers' party are just misleading workers when they pretend that New Labour is really new. The Labour Party (which as we keep repeating has used the Army to break strikes 14 times since 1945) is an enemy of the working class and has been since 1914.

### Trotskyism in Turmoil

But if the class character of the Labour Party is absolutely clear, what of the Trotskyist groups who are constantly trying to win Labour to their ideas (and in some cases provide the most active members of the Labour Party. The war in Kosovo showed how completely bankrupt is the Trotskyist method. The main opposition to the war was the Committee for Peace in the Balkans. This was an unholy alliance of the SWP, the Stalinoid-now-democratic Communist Party of Britain and assorted Christians and CNDers. Their slogan was "Stop the Bombing". This was totally one-sided. Basically it meant that the Committee supported Serbia. This was the open and anti-revolutionary position of the Stalinists. They still think that there is something "proletarian" about Serbia. This is because it has a lot of state-owned industry and this is their idea of a socialist utopia. Less honest as always were the SWP. They repeated the "Stop the Bombing" slogan endlessly and published lots of pictures of victims of NATO bombing but none of Kosovan refugees. This was no oversight but a calculated policy of support to the state capitalist Serbian regime. The SWP were quite right when they pointed out that the Serbian atrocities got worse when NATO started bombing but they

did exist before that date. Workers in Britain who were fed the Blair line would only have been confused which side to support since the SWP did not stress that the war on both sides was a war against the working class (but then talk of class might have alienated their middle class allies in CND etc.). The truth is that the SWP has no clear class perspective and will support any regime which it sees as anti-American (the US being, for them the only imperialist state).

If the SWP were demonstrating just how far from a class perspective they were, their smaller rivals were outdoing themselves in Jesuitical justifications for their insane and anti-working class positions. Workers Power, Workers Liberty, Socialist Outlook etc. all called for arming the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). When we pointed out that the KLA was being armed, first by Germany and at the last minute by the USA (see article preceding this) they got very angry. They told us that the USA would not support a real national liberation movement. Wrong again, we said, the USA have given direct military aid to liberation armies throughout the century. They even supported Ho Chi Minh until 1949 (when the fall of China and the beginning of the Cold War meant that the US began to see anti-colonial movements as arms of Russian imperialism). The USA would give support (however reluctant) to any force which would help them realise their interests. They had, after all armed Saddam in Iraq against Iran until he tried to get too independent.

With the empirical argument lost the Trotskyists shifted to the methodological. Marxists have always supported "national liberation" struggles they maintain. Again not true. Marx and Engels in the last century supported **some** national liberation movements. But only if they thought the creation of a new state would help develop capitalism (and thus, long-term prepare the grounds for socialist revolution). One place they opposed national liberation was in the Balkans. They considered that giving freedom to the Balkan peoples would only advance reactionary Russian imperialism. Marxists did not support national liberation in the abstract but as a concrete step towards working class emancipation. Today, we live in the epoch of imperialism where there are no progressive national struggles left. Al-

banian nationalism is a good example to illustrate this. If the KLA succeed in getting an independent Kosovo their manifesto calls on them to create a Greater Albania. This will mean destabilising Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania proper. It would create more war and bloodshed. So when the pro-KLA Trotskyists give us the moral imperative that we must support this or that oppressed people (or else we are not Marxist) we can only reply that they should go back and study what Marxism really is. Lenin actually ended up with an erroneous position on national liberation struggles (see article on National Liberation in Africa) but he did at least frame how we should approach this as any other issue.

In his *Letters on Tactics* he criticises "old Bolsheviks" who

*have played so regrettable a role in the history of our party by re-iterating formulas senselessly learned by rote instead of studying the specific features of the new and living reality.*

Collected Works Vol. 24 p.44)

What the Workers Power and Workers Liberty support for the KLA shares with the SWP and CPB is that all of them put the interests of nations before classes. In the era of imperialism the only road to freedom is the international working class revolution. This will abolish state frontiers and nation-states along with commodity production and all the other trappings of capitalism. In the meantime revolutionaries have to propagandise against national interests, national struggles. As we show in our article on African national liberation in this issue, the days when the national struggle could be seen as the prelude to the working class struggle for freedom have gone. As these infernal wars plunge us further into barbarism, into ever greater misery for the working class they are a form of class war carried out by a dying imperialist system. In this historic context there are no more intermediary stages for the working class to go through - the alternative is socialism or barbarism for real. Those who argue for tactical support for bourgeois forces have abandoned any revolutionary agenda and thus are renegades from the working class.

Jock



# The Global Debt Crisis

## Capitalism Offers No Solution

### Poverty and Debt

The G8 countries met in Cologne on June 18th to discuss world debt. It is an issue which has become more and more pressing for world capitalism since the current crisis started back in 1971. In that year Nixon devalued the dollar in an effort to make every other country in the world pay for the USA's balance of payments deficit. For the leading industrial countries this was a piece of cut-throat competition. For the majority of the world it was a total disaster. The gap between the poor and the rich is widening. In 1960 the poorest 20% of the world's population earned 2.3% of global income. By 1991 this had fallen to 1.4%. Today it is 1.1%.

Now the G8 leaders are telling us they have come up with a historic solution. Accompanied by a great fanfare they propose to cut the existing debt stock of the most heavily indebted countries by £44 billions (with an added pious hope from the British that private banks will make a further contribution). This is a feeble step on two counts.

First let's look at the actual scale of current indebtedness. Currently the 52 poorest countries in the world owe £370 billions to the banks and governments of the G8 countries. \$225 billions of this is in Sub-Saharan Africa. A country like Mozambique has a GNP per capita of \$131 yet its debt is \$361 per capita. All Africa pays 60% of its GNP to service the existing debt without even touching the principal sum owed.

The problem of poverty has not receded with time but has widened and deepened. Approximately 1.3 billion people live on less than \$1 per day. Around 2.4 billion live on \$2 per day (just over a pound), to which are added another 30 million each year. Life expectancy for one third of the people of the poorest countries is 40 years, half that of the West. Sub-Saharan Africa has 33 of the 42 poorest countries of the world.

Second, the G8 proposal is just the latest in along line of similar plans. Ten years ago the Paris Club of lender nations agreed to cut the debt burden by a third. It has risen. In 1990 the debt stood at \$1.4 trillion. The debt of the peripheral countries now stands at \$2.5 trillion, which is roughly what is traded each day on the Chicago and New York exchanges.

In 1996 the World Bank (with the IMF) then offered to cut debt by another \$1.4 billion through its Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). But this is an imperialist con. The debt that they are offering to cancel is debt that could

not be paid anyway. However the World Bank does not want an official default (since that would undermine current capital values). Instead it "generously" allows the countries not to pay the debt in return for privatising their main industries, lowering tariffs and opening up the country to foreign investment in key economic sectors. Despite much righteous pontification about spending more on primary health care and education, the IMF insists that such programmes are curtailed as superfluous spending under Structural Adjustment Programmes. To qualify for the new initiative countries have to adhere rigidly to IMF guidelines on budgetary policy for six years (after three years a country can be assessed for debt relief). Debt payments have to have been more than 20-25% of export earnings and total debt must be more than twice or two and a half times export levels. Only then can

they qualify for this "extra" help.

Over thirty countries have been earmarked, only two have qualified - Uganda and Bolivia - with three more



soon to follow. Both the World Bank and the IMF have privately stated that the initiative is not doing anything for the poorest countries, indeed all too often those countries following the IMF prescriptions pay more rather than have their debt cut in real terms. It still remains that the poorest countries will send more capital to the core nations than they receive in aid, grants or any sort of relief. In other words the IMF and World Bank promote policies which benefit the Western countries that fund them. The results have been devastating. To return to the example of Mozambique the ending of tariffs on cashew nuts, for example, meant that they lost markets to India (which the IMF and World Bank have not yet got round to). The result is that 80% of Mozambique's cashew nut workers are unemployed.



## How has this happened?

The current crisis of capitalism, the longest in its history, is the root cause of this massive rise in debt. The peripheral countries, in the main suppliers of raw materials and agricultural produce for the core countries, were hit by the major effects of this crisis, major rises in the price of oil (the first consequence of the Nixon devaluations), which they all needed to import, a loss in the value of their own currencies, and a fall in the prices they could get for their major exports. In short they were stuffed three times over by the capitalist core. As a case in point, Uganda, one of only three nations to receive help under the HIPC initiative (see below), is suffering further problems because of the plunge (25%) in the price of coffee, its major export. Commodity prices are not improving - key commodity prices are still falling - coffee, gold, palladium, nickel and many more. The capitalist core countries, though, have other ideas about the causes of the debt crisis. They still insist on blaming poor countries for poor policies, even though many of those policies were imported via the IMF, World Bank and the like. They blame dictatorships for buying masses of arms - sold, of course, by the same capitalist core countries. They blame it on massive spending on prestige projects, often not completed, but these self-same projects are pursued avidly by the west: the Millenium Dome, the decorative and building projects currently crippling most Japanese cities with debt, huge sporting events which are more about corporate advertising than competition.

The fact is that the debts came about as loans, loans were advanced by various institutions awash with capital which could not find a profitable investment at home. They did not care how the interest payments would be met, they just wanted a return on capital (and the state in many cases underwrote the loan).

United in despoiling the rest of the planet, the Western countries are also manoeuvring to make each other pay more. In the run-up to Cologne Western leaders all tried to present themselves as the ones with the most generous offers on debt. The current G8 deal is basically the proposal Clinton recently made of a \$70 billion cut in peripheral debt. This went beyond the \$50 billion of Brown. But the British were pleased with the

deal since the IMF agreed to sell off some of its gold reserves. The reason this was accepted is because the IMF and World Bank are themselves monetarily bankrupt.

The IMF has insufficient funds in its coffers to cover the promises it has made. At least \$2 billion out of \$30 billion would be sold off, investing the proceeds in interest-bearing assets. The HIPC Trust Fund, administered by the World Bank, is in need itself. Only \$282 million has been pledged by EU governments. There is a current shortfall of \$1.2 billion for this fund. It is also interesting that these calls are continued as the gold price falls and the British Treasury is set to sell off much of its own gold reserves to reinvest in speculative paper. Commenting on the British manoeuvres in Cologne one unnamed French official told the Financial Times

*The British appear very generous with other people's money*

This was because most of the burden of debt relief would fall (if it were ever carried out) on those countries with the highest aid-related debt, i.e. Japan and France. However for all the G8 states, as well as the economic bodies they finance, the debt crisis hangs like an albatross around their neck. The aid given by all the G8 nations is falling. Grants to the periphery fell by \$2.5 billion to \$23 billion in 1998. The perspective of an increasing gap between rich and poor countries is a nightmare prospect. Not only do they fear waves of economic migrants knocking on their doors but they also fear that the burden of debt will be so great that it will eventually bring down the whole world economy. But this is the paralysis that the laws of operation of the capitalist system have brought them to.

## Diversions and real solutions

The headline of the Financial Times on June 19th was extremely heartening.

*Anti-capitalists lay siege to the City of London.*

A pity that the truth was more prosaic! 4,000 assorted anarchists, Greens, Christians carried out various stunts in the City to draw attention to themselves rather than the problem of global poverty. A month ago a demonstration by peasants from various Third World countries against Monsanto and other

TNCs, who are devastating the "Third World" both environmentally and financially, went largely unnoticed but then self-publicity was not their forte.

The liberal participants in the milder protests belong to the Christian-dominated Jubilee 2000 campaign. This is the most utopian of all the campaigns against debt since it thinks that suspending debt, cancelling it or making the whole process of debt-relief easier is a solution. In the first place cancelling debt would not cancel the basic problem which is that the global market is rigged against primary producers. New debts would soon accrue. However even if capitalists did have a Damascan conversion and tried to cancel debt it would bring down the whole system. The process of accumulation depends on capitalism defending the value of existing capitals. If it fails to do this then the whole financial structure of the system would collapse. They are not going to commit suicide.

The organisers of the openly "anti-capitalist" antics are a step further forward than the liberals. They at least recognise that the problem is the system. However they offer no path to how to end the system. Unless they think giving the red braces an extra day on their weekend is a step towards the destruction of capitalism. The idea that three or four thousand demonstrators can do anything to halt the system is not only foolish but also elitist. Capitalism could collapse tomorrow from its own internal contradictions (and this debt crisis is one of the signs of those contradictions) but what then? The answer to us is that the working class, the exploited and dispossessed of the planet would have to unite to build a communist society. But this requires that the working class is ready and prepared and this in turn requires a long and patient work of building its independent organisation and consciousness. When the debt of the peripheral countries is a pressing issue involving the premature deaths of countless human beings, the poverty and suffering of millions we wish there were a quicker solution. But there is no quick fix. We have to build an international organisation to fight for a world revolution. As the article from Colombia later in this issue shows global capitalist barbarism or world revolution is the only alternative facing humanity.

**clastre**



# Rotten Food in a Decaying System

**H**ow a society solves the material problems of obtaining food, clothing and shelter are what distinguishes one historical period from another. Without the discovery of farming in the so-called Neolithic Revolution we would not have seen all the successive achievements of the last 10,000 years. However the developments in farming during the capitalist epoch have brought with them a mound of contradictions. Nowhere is it more obvious that we live in a decaying social system than in the scandals about food.

In the advanced capitalist countries the question of food safety has become more acute with the discovery that previously "scientifically approved" practices have been simply lethal. It was through the introduction of recycled and therefore cheaper feedstuffs for animals that British beef became embroiled in the 'mad cow' battles. British beef was made even cheaper and so more profitable by the introduction of even more lax rules on what could be introduced into feedstuffs for the British beef industry. Feeding parts of animals to herbivorous beasts was supposed to be a "neat idea" to increase their value quickly. The tragedy of Creutzfeldt-Jacobs was a direct result of the greed of major British beef producers and traders, and a Conservative government which acted as their agent in the matter. For them the tragedy was not the deaths of the victims but the loss of markets.

Whilst the spotlight has recently moved onto Belgian pork, chicken, dairy and egg products which have been contaminated by dioxin, a well-known lethal carcinogenic agent, the issue remains the same.

Food production is increasingly an area of highly industrialised production. The use of all kinds of chemicals is the stuff of modern food commodity production, as is the use of highly processed feedstuffs. What matters to the capitalist

food commodity producers is high yield and long shelf life. They want to get more from both their workers and their raw materials. They also do not want to see possibly saleable commodities wasted through going out of date. Food production is also an area of increasing competition, with the growing centralisation of capital throughout the world in agri-business concerns. This is the stuff of trade wars, as we have seen recently over bananas, beef, genetically modified food, and now Belgian meat and dairy products.

In a modern capitalism still in the grip of crisis, every area of possible profit is fought over. Food is just one more area for the various multinationals and the countries concerned to engage in battle.

## GM and Imperialism

In the case of Genetically modified (so-called GM food, one major US-based multinational rules the roost - the US giant, Monsanto. Genetic modification would give them a capacity to gain higher yields from more resistant raw materials - animals and crops. It would thus give them an advantage in their global trade

- a variety of food commodities which cost less through such yields and less waste prior to production

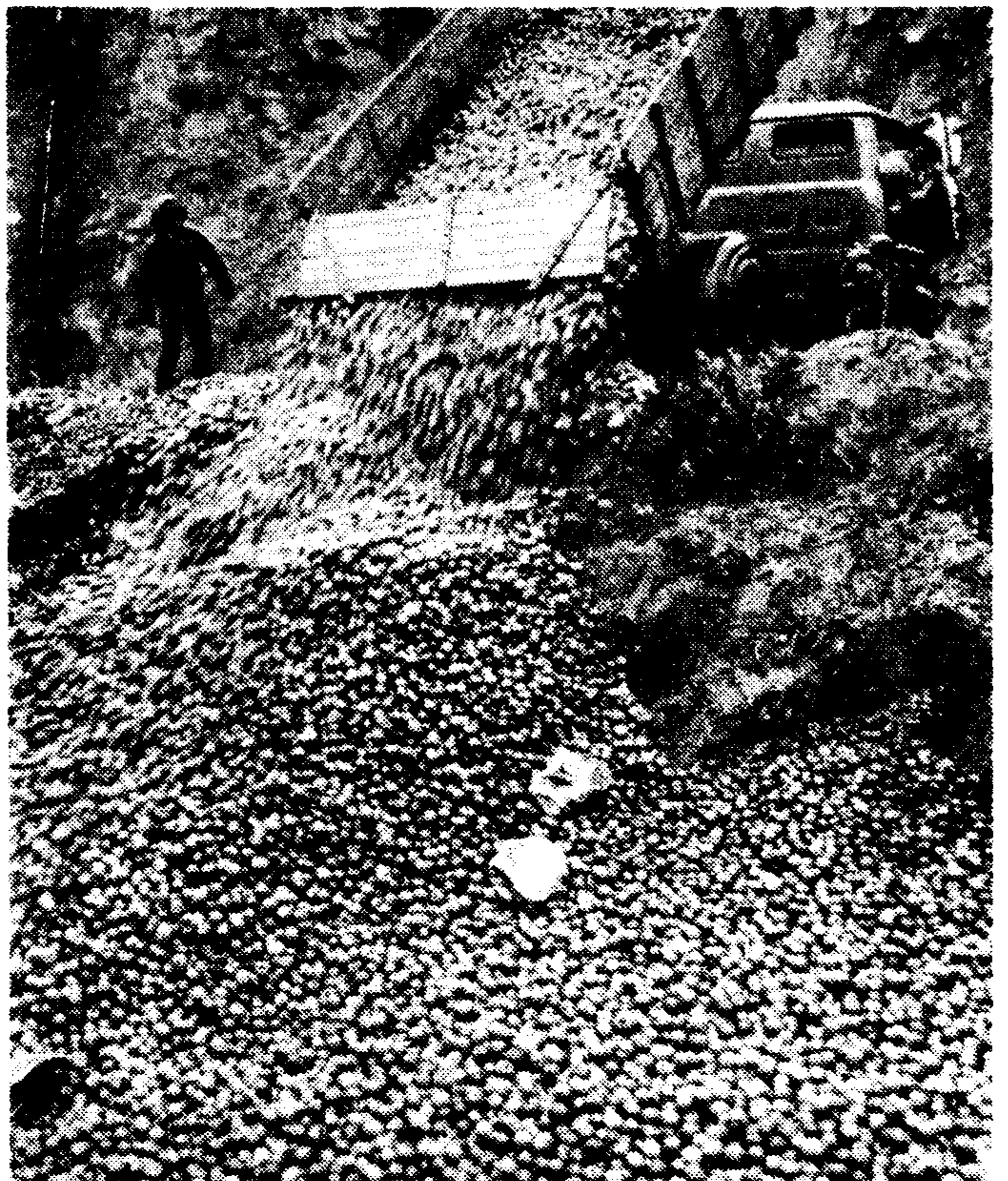
- a series of food commodities which wasted less through having a longer

shelf life, being saleable for longer

- a greater hold on the market of food production through having all such strains of crops as their own intellectual property, as in the ongoing arguments within the World Trade Organisation over just such 'property rights'

- The capacity to sell new seed each year since genetically modified seed would include a "terminator gene" which would ensure that any seed saved from a crop would be sterile forcing farmers to buy seed every year

The scientific lobby has been co-opted in this whole matter as cheerleaders. Re-



The economics of insanity. Capitalism dumps billions of tons of food whilst millions starve.

cently one of the major science committees made the statement that GM foods were one means of combating and eradicating world hunger through its increased production of food. This is nonsense. World hunger is caused by



unequal property relations rather than backward agricultural methods. Currently the world produces more than enough food to feed us all. The increasing famines and hunger arise from the unequal distribution of the capitalist mode of production. In the current period this means the intervention of agri-business into traditional economies.

We have already seen this in the last few decades in countries which have supposedly "liberated" themselves from colonial rule. As we wrote in *Internationalist Communist Review 7*

*... the legacy of this form of overt imperialist exploitation remains in capitalism's periphery today in the so-called "development trap" which impels ex-colonial states to concentrate on cash crops for export in order to earn foreign exchange to fund urban development. The resultant decline in their ability to feed the indigenous populations, the permanent threat of soil damage and crop diseases which come with monocultural farming, the reduced market prices which accompany any significant increase in yields, in short the impossibility of "taking off" to industrial development are too well-known*

### **Marxism and the Agrarian Question**

Yet the world already produces enough food to feed us all. Capital, though, will not allow it to be distributed and consumed unless it can make a profit from it. Hence the reason why the US distribution monopoly Cargill pour millions of tons of wheat into the sea every year or why the EU's Common Agricultural Policy leads to stockpiling and destruction food. World hunger is a direct result of the greed for profits, the motor force of capitalism. The real goal of having genetically modified seed is to give even greater control of agricultural production to agri-corporations like Monsanto. First they have been behind the US Government policy to get all nation states to open up their economy to "free enterprise". What this means is that huge companies which dispose of more income than most national states will be allowed to impose their own agenda and products on weaker economies.

A classic example is India. Until the 1980s 80% of the seed planted in India was saved from the best of the previous



Farmers in India destroy GM crops trialled by Monsanto

year's crop. In this it was no different to most of the countries on capitalism's periphery. But then the World Bank and IMF came along. They offered the Indian Government £90 billion if they opened up the heavily protected economy and dismantled the state subsidised seed supplying organisation. The way was now open for US agri-business. They persuaded millions of poor Indian farmers to turn from subsistence farming with a little bit of cash crop to growing only cash crops. The results have been disastrous since if the cash crop failed (as it did over the last three years) the farmers have nothing. There have been hundreds of suicides amongst indebted Indian farmers in the first few months of this year. But worse is to come. Monsanto have bought the Indian seed supply company formerly operated by Cargill (at an estimated cost of \$4 billion). They make no secret of their monopoly ambitions. A director of Monsanto told Indian journalists

*We are aiming to consolidate the whole food chain.*

Monsanto is developing genetically modified seeds for wheat, corn, sunflower, fruit and vegetables, rice and grain, as well as cotton (which is India's major export earner). Monsanto claim that they will be able to introduce crops that don't need pesticides so that farmers can rely on them more. However what they aim at is total control of the seed market. If Indian farmers get seed including the "terminator" gene they will be entirely dependent on whatever Monsanto produces and have to pay what Monsanto asks. Monsanto will control the heart of the Indian economy.

Some Indians have already woken up to the danger that this form of neo-colonialism represents. As the photograph illustrates they have burned genetically-modified crops in protest.

However this won't be enough to kill off the threat posed by GM seed. The great corporations which control the market will always be able to manipulate it as well as governments in their interests. Agricultural experiments in the Deccan of India and in 45 big African projects have shown that a collective agriculture based on the use of traditional methods is sustainable. It does not yield short term success followed by long-term disaster as the so-called "Green Revolution" of the 1970s brought. Whilst the implementation of Western techniques has led to desertification and famine in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa these experiments point to a more sustainable form of agriculture in which yields have risen by 50 - 100%. However so long as these operate inside capitalist relations such experiments will not only remain isolated but will also be directly threatened by the power of monopoly capitalists. Their future success can only be assured by a shift in the relations of production, a destruction of private property not only in land but also in terms of such things as the ownership of seeds and so-called intellectual property. Here the peoples of the periphery cannot hope to succeed on their own. Only the destruction of the capitalist mode of production in its citadels of the big monopolies will the possibility of a really sustained agriculture be realised.

**Cde/AD**



## Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe

# The More It Changes The More It Stays The Same

**T**he two most powerful and economically important countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria and South Africa have just experienced changes in government. In Nigeria a decade and a half of military rule was ended by the installation of civilian rule on 29 May and in South Africa the final act in the transition to bourgeois democracy took place on 2 June with the first elections under the new constitution. These changes illustrate that in the present stage of capitalism the bourgeois democratic form of government is the most suited to the needs of imperialism, even in the peripheral countries. However, although the government may change, these changes are changes in the organisation of class rule in these countries and bring little benefit to the working class. In fact, these changes represent a great charade in which workers are invited to take part, so that they will have participated in the new government structures which oppress and exploit them. They are part of an intellectual disarming of the working class to weaken its resistance to attacks of the "democratic" government.

The following text briefly examines the developments in Nigeria and South Africa, countries which experienced "national liberation" approximately 35 years apart, and then looks at Zimbabwe, a country where the national struggle succeeded 20 years ago, and examines the actual benefits the working class has derived from these struggles. The theoretical issues raised are taken up in "National Liberation in Africa - Half A Century Against The Working Class" which follows these articles.

## Nigeria - Civilian Rule

### Demanded By US and Europe

**N**igeria, which has a population of 120 million people is Africa's most populous country and it is also potentially one of its wealthiest. It has vast deposits of oil, coal and tin, together with water, forests and enormous potential agricultural production. Yet despite this it is a country of general poverty, where only the ruling classes have benefited from this wealth and in particular the political elite have used their offices to become millionaires. Successive regimes have been happy to allow oil to become the single most important source of revenue to the extent that it now accounts for 95% of the country's foreign exchange earnings and 80% of its budgetary revenues. The collapse in the oil price in 1998 seriously weakened the regime and caused it to capitulate to pressure from Europe and the US to institute a return to civilian rule.

The military who have ruled the country since 1983 are notoriously corrupt and became incapable on instituting the changes international capital demanded.

It is openly admitted that the previous ruler General Abacha stole \$800 million from the state. The general died mysteriously in June 98. Although the official explanation was that he suffered a heart attack while engaged in an orgy with three prostitutes, it is clear that he needed to be got out of the way and the rumour is that he was poisoned. His replacement, General Abubakar, started to implement some of the measures demanded by the US and Europe, such as the return to civilian rule and the implementation of the measures dictated by the IMF. He has also set about securing the lifting of sanctions which had been imposed on the country in 1995 after the hanging of the local rights activist, Ken Saro Wiwa.

The dire state of the country can be gathered from a few statistics. Nigeria, which is the world's eighth largest oil producer and produces over 2 million barrels per day is now having to import fuel because the refineries have not been maintained. The country is actually suffering from fuel shortages! A similar

lack of maintenance has brought most of manufacturing industry to its knees. In agriculture, the country which previously was a large net exporter of food has failed to progress from subsistence agriculture and is now having to import food. It also suffers from deforestation and desertification. Railways and roads are in a state of ruin; hospitals and schools are disintegrating and unable to provide medical care or education. In short the whole economic infra-structure is in a state of near collapse. The country is desperately short of capital, which it is unable to generate internally, and also unable to raise abroad, while the external debt is \$34 bn. Unemployment is 28% which means 12 million workers are out of work! The decline in living conditions is shown by the fact that the last two decades have seen the average per capita income fall from \$1000 in 1980 to \$300 today. People are today poorer than they were at the time of independence in 1960.

Oil is, of course, the single most important commodity in Nigeria and since the



country's economy has become so dependent on it, it is the oil companies who are the final arbiter of the country's fate. Ultimately the government is the executive of the international oil companies. The military government, however, had become so inefficient and corrupt that it no longer served the oil companies' interests. The oil companies, for example, are suffering direct attacks from the local populations particularly in the delta region. Ralph Fabray, a chief in the delta area where oil was first discovered in 1946 describes the oil companies and the government as a "syndicate of criminals" and complains that "we have never benefited from the oil." (*Economist* 13/2/99) In the delta region companies have had staff kidnapped and had to ransom them, have had installations attacked and destroyed and have been forced into providing schools and roads as a price for continuing to extract oil. This has been enforced by gangs of local armed activists. Shell, which alone extracts half of all Nigeria's oil, has, in 1998, had to pay \$30 million directly to local to development projects in order to ensure social stability. The government is failing to protect the oil companies and its incompetent attempts to do so, such as hanging the local rights activist and writer Ken Saro Wiwa who demanded local, rather than Federal, control of the country's oil resulted in international condemnation, sanctions and expulsion from the Commonwealth. Under these circumstances the companies have been withholding investment. Of course, if the country is to recover it desperately needs foreign capital. The IMF has drawn up a programme which could qualify Nigeria for \$1.5bn over 3 years and the possibility of re-schedul-

ing its \$34 bn foreign debt provided the government carries out the IMF's demands. These include privatisation of government utilities and the 60% of stock which the government holds in joint ventures. All this must be monitored by the IMF.

From the above it can be seen how dependent the country is on international capital and when international capital demanded a change in regime it found a way of complying. Once general Abubakar was installed he set the wheels in motion for a return to civilian rule, and started to implement changes demanded by the IMF. He set up, for example, a "National Council on Privatisation" chaired by his deputy and pledged to sell off more than 40 state owned companies. It is significant that once these measures were started Shell announced an \$8.5 bn programme of investment.

The transition to civilian rule has been something of a farce. The election was rigged and the "civilian candidate" who won was General Obasanjo, a previous military ruler who had the credentials for the job since he handed over power to civilians in 1979. It is clear that Obasanjo is a compromise candidate who will protect the military and pension them off without asking too many awkward questions about their looting of the state. It is, however, clear that Obasanjo is not an ideal candidate for international capital. When he was ruler in 1979 he nationalised British Petroleum (BP) for selling oil to apartheid South Africa. This, of course, is one of the companies the IMF is demanding be privatised. The head of the IMF,

Camdessus, visited Nigeria in March and demanded privatisation, openness and accountability and that Nigeria honour its existing debts. Obasanjo, however, spoke of his belief that "Nigerians should control the country's main economic assets." For Camdessus this was a preposterous idea and completely contrary to the dictates of the IMF. It is a measure of how far the world has changed from the 1960s that today a politician, such as Obasanjo, stating that the national bourgeoisie should control the nation's wealth is regarded as an irresponsible fool. It is, however, an undeniable fact that international capital, of which Camdessus is a spokesman, has a stranglehold on Nigeria and is able to dictate and enforce its terms.

What will the Nigerian working class gain from the game of musical chairs going on in the Federal government? Absolutely nothing! Indeed, we should ask the question what have they gained from 40 years of independence? The statistics for unemployment and the drop in wages speak for themselves. Living conditions are today worse than under the British and there is officially 28% unemployment. As global capital tightens its grip, rationalisations and speed-ups will follow privatisation and further internationalisation of the economy. These developments will inevitably lead to further redundancies just as they have for the European working class. The only way forward for the working class is to fight for its own interests against all factions of the national bourgeoisie. Such a fight must be the international one against international capital for a communist world.

## South Africa - Bourgeois Democracy At Last

**I**n South Africa the June elections are the final step in the establishment of bourgeois democracy in the country. They are the first held under the new constitution adopted in May 1996 and mark the end of the transition period opened up with the elections of 1994 which led to the so-called "National Unity Government." The CWO has consistently pointed out that the ANC represents the interests of the rising African bourgeois class but was brought to power to rescue the interests of the South Africa capitalist class as a whole.

(See "The Bitter Lessons of National Liberation" in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 9) The ANC represents the fraction of the South Africa capitalist class most suited to rescuing capitalist interests from the disaster which the previous two decades of apartheid had created. We have condemned the ANC as a political force opposed to the working class and advised workers not to give it any support or to allow themselves to be enlisted as cannon fodder in its battles with other factions of the South Africa capitalist class.

During the last 6 months the mask of self righteous reconciliation of all interests and justice for all has begun to slip revealing the more familiar face of bourgeois interests which are concealed behind such masks. In September the ANC sent its troops into Lesotho to put down an uprising in its tiny neighbour state. Such an intervention is in direct continuity with the previous interventions of the apartheid regime, the only difference was that it was more incompetently executed and destroyed a large part of the capital Maseru. Where, we



might ask the great moralists of the ANC, was the UN resolution authorising this invasion? South Africa's military and economic domination of southern Africa is being reasserted. Already opposition to this is being registered by a loose alliance of Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Zambia. The country's initial failure to support the Kabila regime in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which it subsequently reversed, has also created distrust. South Africa efforts to turn the Southern African Development Community (SADC) into a free trade area have also led to suspicion by the majority who fear South Africa's economic dominance. "I won't have them treating me like a province of South Africa," retorted Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe. South Africa recognising this opposition has embarked on a programme of re-arming its forces. It plans to spend \$5.2 bn on aeroplanes, helicopters and naval vessels over the next 4 years. As the deputy defence minister Ronnie Kasrills remarked (echoing the words of the ultra-imperialist US President Theodore Roosevelt) "We will now be able to talk softly and carry a big stick." Such a massive expenditure is being undertaken at a time when so-called "priorities" such as housing, hospitals and education are desperately underfunded. Another indication of this return to normal bourgeois policies is the revival of the armaments industry which in 1997, under ANC control, sold \$216m of arms to 61 countries including Israel. These developments illustrate the country's return to its previous role of a local imperialist power asserting its interests by military and economic means.

Within the country the ANC is following the economic policies demanded by international capital. The programme of privatisation continues, this remains the most successful route for attracting foreign capital, together with rationalisation and job shedding. Hundreds of thousands of workers have lost their jobs since 1994. In this period 760 000 jobs have gone in the agricultural sector and in 1997 alone 45 000 jobs were axed in the mines. Overall, unemployment has increased by 500 000 since the ANC took power in the 1994 elections. This is a recipe for massive social discontent yet the ANC has succeeded in controlling this situation and the class struggle. In the period 1990 to 94 the average number of working days lost through strikes per year was 6.1 million

yet in the period 1995 to 98 when the ANC was in power, this figure had dropped to 2.4 million. This represents a decrease in strike action of about 60%, something which no other faction of the South Africa capitalist class could have achieved. All these measures have not gone unrecognised by international capital and in March this year they have been rewarded by an agreement of access for South Africa to the EU market. Little wonder that the June elections will overwhelmingly re-confirm the ANC's power.

As we predicted ANC leaders are converting themselves into leading members of the bourgeoisie and being welcomed by their white class brothers with open arms. Even the bourgeois press is full of the names of the former heroes of the freedom struggle who are now transformed into millionaires. Nthato Motlana, Mandela's doctor, Dikgang Moseneke, former head of the PAC, Cyril Ramaphosa, former general secretary of the ANC and Mzi Khumalo former Robben Island prisoner are all examples of men who have made the meteoric rise to wealth. The ridiculous idea held by ANC supporters that black capitalists would treat black workers better than white capitalists is being contradicted daily. Mzi Khumalo, now the manager of the mining house JCI, put it this way,

*I have spoken to the unions at JCI and made it clear we are here to run a business. I am not for any of this brotherhood stuff.* " <bodytext> (Quoted in Guardian 22/4/99)

The trade unions, however, are, like the European Unions becoming major investors in the companies which exploit their members. Ramaphosa, who was himself once leader to the miners union (NUM), went on to found the Mineworkers Investment Company, which aim to invest union funds in the stock market. He promises to make massive gains for the union but admits granting himself £800 000 in share options. The unions cynically maintain this is a better way to maintain their members wages than strike action. In fact the members see nothing of the reported stock market killings. Instead the unions tell them not to strike as that damages stock prices. This illustrates once more how the unions are integrated from top to bottom in the capitalist system, how their material

interests are in maintaining capitalism, their solidarity with the bosses, and that they cannot support any independent class struggle.

The gains for the working class in all of this are minimal. All the causes for which they fought have proved to be illusions. The ANC and its trade union camp followers have become the new organisers of South Africa capitalism. The new constitution enshrines the rights of the capitalist class; the new administration steers the country back into the matrix of imperialist relationships in southern Africa; the new bosses demand exploitation as normal and scoff at the idea of black brotherhood. Rationalisation, speed ups and unemployment are imposed on the workers while the government and the trade unions break strikes. The promised improvements in housing, health and education do not materialise, instead a programme of re-armament is undertaken. What the years of struggle have really proved is that the fundamental divisions in South Africa are and always were ones of class and not ones of race. The illusions of the national struggle have succeeded in burying this lesson and it will take years of further struggle for this to be properly understood. However, for the South Africa workers organisation on class lines for class interests and for a communist future is the only way forward.

## **Zimbabwe**

(from previous page)

his position but either he or another leader will eventually have to agree to the demands and programmes of the IMF. Mugabe's attempts to avoid such a capitulation will only hasten his downfall.

For the working class the issues are more clear cut than in South Africa. The regime has reduced their living standards by approximately 40% since 1990 and created massive unemployment - at least 2.1 million workers are now without work. It has increased prices, banned strikes and used troops to break strikes and shoot workers. Twenty years after the liberation struggle was won it is clear that there are absolutely no gains from the national liberation struggle for the workers. Zimbabwean workers now treat the regime as simply another bourgeois government against which they need to struggle in order to survive.



# Zimbabwe - Class Struggle Threatens Regime

**Z**imbabwe is a country in which the national struggle was successful in 1979 and which has experienced two decades of rule by African nationalists. Zimbabwe is therefore a country where the tendencies already visible in South Africa have had longer to develop. As in South Africa the national liberation leaders converted themselves into the new bourgeoisie and acted as the local agents of western imperialism. This has, of course, meant breaking of many promises made during the liberation war and the subsequent elections. Whereas after independence the regime faithfully carried out the programme of international capital, the last few years have seen the regime attempting to assert its independence through defiance of the IMF and proposing to expropriate capitalist farmland all of which is leading to a situation in which the regime could collapse. This is being done for the interests of the new African bourgeois class particularly the top people now in the government. It is not, of course, being done to benefit the working class.

Like most peripheral countries the government has a large external debt of \$5 bn which when added to the commercial bank debts amounts to 57% of the GDP, and which puts it in the hands of the IMF as soon as difficulties arise in repayments or further capital is required. The country has been implementing the familiar programme, designed by the IMF which, in Zimbabwe, is called the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and consists of privatisation and commercialisation of state owned enterprises, cutting back on subsidies and government expenditure. In 1995 the government failed to meet some of the IMF targets and the IMF suspended all aid. Loans were later resumed but have recently been suspended once more. As the world economic crisis has intensified, particularly following the far eastern economic crisis in 1998, the Government came under great economic pressure.

In November 1998 the regime introduced massive increases in prices of fuel and food. Fuel prices rose by 67%, elec-

tricity 100% and food 22%. The working class reacted by striking protesting and rioting. On 11/11/98 strikes, demanding a 20% wage increase, paralysed industry and transport across the whole country. The regime's response was the same as bourgeois governments the world over, to send in troops. In the eastern Zimbabwe town of Mutare troops opened fire on 25000 protesters killing one person. The regime responded by banning strikes. The increase in the price of kero-

the confiscation of 5 million hectares of land, and later went on to draw up a list of farms. This plan, which has not yet been carried out, is flatly opposed by the IMF but with massive discontent amongst the peasantry it will now be difficult for Mugabe to draw back.

It is under these circumstances that the regime has entered into the Congolese war. Officially 8000 troops have been sent to prop up the Kabila regime in the

Democratic Republic of Congo. This adventure has, however, proved ruinously expensive with costs estimated to be between £600 000 and £1.2 million per day. It has also proved unpopular since the coffins started to come back almost at once - so far 100 soldiers have been killed. There is little doubt that the ruling class has plunged itself into this conflict in the hope of defusing a catastrophic domestic situation by a short and glorious military episode. However, it appears that the familiar and sordid bourgeois motives for war exist alongside these tactical calculations. Zimbabwean defence industries and private groups controlled by senior government officials are owed \$93 million by Kabila for arms already delivered during the Kabila rebellion. The ruling clique has also been purchasing extensive mineral rights in the province of Katanga and Zimbabwe is at present exporting Congolese cobalt and diamonds. In short the ruling elite stand to lose a fortune if Kabila falls and it is for this reason that Zimbabwean soldiers are being sent to their deaths.

The IMF is again withholding loans from Zimbabwe. It has demanded to be told how the war is being financed. It is rumoured that Libya is financing the country's war effort. In view of the recent (but unsuccessful) Libyan peace agreement signed by Kabila and Uganda's Museveni at Sirte this may be true. What is undeniable, however, is that Zimbabwe is now thoroughly enmeshed in the imperialist intrigues being played out in southern Africa. As in the case of Nigeria the country's ultimate fate is in the hands of international capital. Mugabe is trying to escape the logic of



sene was reversed but the other price rises remained in force. Such price rises come at a time when unemployment is 45%, inflation 50% and interest rates 40%. A further explosive issue is that of land redistribution. In 1980 the ruling ZANU party promised to settle 162 000 families on white farming land. So far only about a third of this number have been resettled on poor quality government owned land, and most of the good quality land has gone to top members of ZANU. Such a parcellisation of the land will reduce agricultural output by at least a third, and since agriculture still accounts for 40% of the country's export earnings this is an economically disastrous undertaking. The regime is also unable to compensate farmers whose land is expropriated in this parcellization. For these reasons the regime has done nothing for the last 20 years but talk about it. With the increasing unpopularity of the regime in early 1998 the president, Mugabe, announced



## National Liberation In Africa

# Half A Century Against The Working Class

It is now over half a century since national struggles in Africa started to be successful and the withdrawal of the colonial powers began. Although the last colonial power to formally withdraw was Portugal in the mid 70s the process of national liberation could not really be considered complete until the overthrow of the minority white regimes in Zimbabwe, in 1979, and South Africa, in 1994. With the transition to majority rule in South Africa a phase in the continent's history may be considered complete. Throughout this process the ideology of national liberation and national self determination have been the slogans of the struggle, and in country after country the working class has been mobilised behind the national bourgeoisie in the name of freedom, in the name of anti-imperialism and even in the name of socialism. This mobilisation has been supported not only by the national bourgeoisie but also by the left wing of capital in the metropolitan countries, namely the Stalinists, Trotskyists, Maoists, some anarchists and, of course, the liberal capitalists.

After half a century of nationalist struggle we may demand to know what precisely these struggles have achieved for the working class.

The general situation of Africa, with the exception of a handful of countries, is desperate. The bulk of African states are crippled by debts to the metropolitan countries and their international agencies such as the IMF and World Bank. This has led to a situation where so-called "independent states" are dominated by international capital as never before. Country after country has privatisation and restructuring plans drawn up by the IMF which they are implementing, and which serve only to further strengthen the grip of international capital and depress the living standards of the working class and peasantry. In some states, e.g. Mozambique,

international capital is actually being invited back to run sections of the infrastructure such as railways and ports. In others central authority has actually collapsed leading to Balkanisation under local war lords and a return to subsistence economy. This dire economic state is, of course, the cause of the continent's wars. A quarter of all states in Africa are at war. One war, that in the Congo, has drawn in troops from 8 surrounding countries. In the last decade between 2.5 and 3 million people have been killed in wars and it has been calculated that there are now 120 000 children, some as young as 7, serving in the armies involved in these wars.

The working class is the victim of this economic decline and the wars which accompany it. The text, "The more it changes the more it stays the same," in this edition shows the wretched condition of the workers in Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe. It should be remembered that these countries are amongst the more successful in Africa. In general living conditions for the working class are today worse than in the colonial period and unemployment is more severe. Wars have brought about the massacre of hundreds of thousands of workers and the displacement of peoples with masses of refugees and disruption of economies on a scale never witnessed before. Health and life expectancy have declined and in those countries affected by the AIDS epidemic this decline has brought average life span to little over 40 years.

While the material conditions of the working class are generally desperate, intellectually its level of consciousness is similarly low. Only in a few countries can it be said that the workers are conscious of themselves a class with separate interests from the rest of society. Revolutionary minorities which express the understanding of the need to overthrow capitalist society and create a

communist world do not, as far as we know, exist at all. On the contrary the national struggle has sown confusion amongst the most conscious workers and delivered them into the hands of the national bourgeoisie.

Ultimately the present state of the African working class arises from the operation of the capitalist system itself, and the actions of imperialism. However, this will be true so long as capitalism continues to exist and the question which still needs to be answered is "what benefits has the working class derived from its support for the national bourgeoisie in liberation struggles?" From even the most cursory examination of the facts, it is clear that there are no benefits, either material, organisational or in consciousness that can be attributed to this support. What, we should rather ask, were the benefits which the theoreticians of this tactical support argued would result. We will briefly look at the theoretical reasons advanced for this tactical support for the national bourgeoisie in liberation struggles.

### National Struggles Before World War 1

In the nineteenth century communists argued that workers should support the struggle of their national bourgeoisie to destroy the feudal landowning class as this would lay the long term foundation for the communist revolution. Where the national bourgeoisie were struggling to establish a national state this struggle was considered progressive, progressive in that it was part of the progressive march to communism. Feudal reaction prevented the development of the forces of capitalist production, whereas national bourgeois states provided an ideal political structure for their development. With the development of the forces of production came the corresponding de-



velopment of the working class. As the working class was produced through the extension and consolidation of the capitalist system it gradually became more centralised, more organised and more politically conscious of its historic tasks. Germany and Italy were the best examples of this process and the justification of this tactic.

However, even in the 19th century such support for the national bourgeoisie was a tactical question and was subordinated to the general interests of the working class as a whole. Marx, for example, was not exactly enthusiastic about the way Germany was unified. He would have preferred a Germany which was more clearly controlled by the rising capitalist classes. Instead the new Germany was constructed by a crafty coalition forged by Bismarck between the Prussian military and the extreme right wing of the new bourgeoisie. He told Engels that this wasn't the Germany that they wanted but that the working class "must make the best of it". Marx also considered that it was more important to check Russian reaction which he saw as a force against the development of the entire European working class than to support some national struggles. Consequently, in the period of the Crimean war, he did not support Balkan Slavs who were struggling for independence from Turkey, but rather the integrity of the Ottoman empire. This was a position which the social democrats reversed at the end of the century when they concluded, correctly, that political disintegration of Turkey would speed capitalist development and weaken Russian absolutism.

In certain countries the construction of national bourgeois states would not necessarily benefit the development of the working class. The most famous case is that of Poland where it was argued by the Polish Social Democrats (SDKPiL), and in particular by Rosa Luxemburg, that the task of Polish workers was to unite with their Russian class brothers and sisters to overthrow Russian reaction. The creation of a national Polish state would erect an artificial barrier between Polish and Russian workers and should therefore be resisted. Support for Polish nationalism in the working class was in fact a reactionary force which manifested itself concretely when nationalist sections of the Polish workers movement broke strikes in 1905 thereby

helping Tsarism defeat the Russian workers revolution. Lenin still insisted that Polish nationalism could be progressive but history proved otherwise. These same sections of the working class lent their support to Rosa Luxemburg's old adversary Josef Pilsudski. His Polish Socialist Party opposed the Russian Revolution on nationalist grounds (despite the granting of the right of self determination which no Russian ruler had ever contemplated), and with the help of international imperialism (notably France) took territory from the young Soviet Republic in 1920. "Marshal" Pilsudski later became dictator of Poland in 1926 and signed a ten year friendship pact with Hitler in 1934!

### **1914: A Turning Point in World History**

Poland shows just how arguments such as these could take place in the period up to the First World War but also how the outbreak of this war signalled that a turning point in capitalist development had been reached. The war indicated that capitalism had globally reached a point at which its crises could only be solved by war. It further indicated that on a world scale the foundations for the communist system of production had been laid. Capitalism had thus become a decadent social formation whose overthrow was now objectively on the historical agenda. This was recognised by Lenin in his April Theses in 1917 when the previous Bolshevik programme of support for the national bourgeoisie in creating bourgeois democracy in Russia was dropped, and in its place the programme of building socialism was adopted. The construction of socialism, which the Bolsheviks clearly understood and stated, was a world system, was based on the understanding that the world's productive forces and the world proletariat were sufficiently developed to achieve this task. The revolution made in October 1917 was the first step in the world revolution, and, like the war itself, it was a manifestation that a new historical period had begun, the period of wars and revolutions. With the dawning of this period the bourgeoisie had become a globally reactionary class and the sole task of the working class world-wide was to struggle for the communist revolution.

If a new phase had opened up with the war, then clearly previous tactical poli-

cies on the national question had to be revised. It is impossible for the proletariat anywhere to support national revolutions, to struggle for the formation of national states, while also struggling to create communism on a world scale. Communism entails the overthrowing of the bourgeoisie, not giving it support, it entails the destruction of national states, not their creation. The two struggles are opposed and contradictory. The change in the historical period meant that the period when the working class could support its national bourgeoisie had ended and tactical support was now impossible. However, the recognition of this change was made only by the left communists who became increasingly marginalised with the degeneration of the Russian revolution.

The Bolsheviks maintained their policies on the national question which they had developed in the period before the war and, of course, before the April Theses and the October revolution. The granting of national self determination to the outlying areas of the former Tsarist empire (including Poland) was the result of this policy. This was a tragic mistake for which the revolution would have to pay dearly. In effect this was an abandonment of the workers in these areas to their local bourgeoisie. It was mercilessly criticised by Rosa Luxemburg.

*The Bolsheviks were to be taught, to their own great hurt and that of the revolution, that under the rule of capitalism there is no self-determination of peoples, that in a class society each class of the nation strives to 'determine itself' in a different fashion; and that for the bourgeois classes, the stand-point of national freedom is fully subordinated to that of class rule. The Finnish bourgeoisie, like the Ukrainian, was unanimous in preferring the violent rule of Germany to national freedom, if the latter should be bound up with Bolshevism.*

(Rosa Luxemburg "The Nationalities Question in the Russian Revolution.")

Further in the same text she writes;

*Without the help of German rifle butts... the scoundrels of the Ukraine, the Erichs and Mannerheims of Finland, and the Baltic barons would never have got the better of the socialist masses of workers in their respective lands. But national separatism was the*



*Trojan horse inside which the German 'comrades' bayonets in hand, made their entrance into all those lands. The real class antagonisms and relations of military force brought about German intervention. But the Bolsheviks provided the ideology which masked this campaign of counter-revolution; they strengthened the position of the bourgeoisie and weakened that of the proletariat.*

(Rosa Luxemburg *Ibid.*)

To be fair to the Bolsheviks they did not abandon the working class in Finland, the Ukraine or Poland but lacked the material force to help them. The really disastrous consequences of supporting the movements for national self determination in Europe was that it confusingly undermined the programme for working class emancipation. This became even more confused in the debates in the Third International. Lenin, in trying to counteract the obvious decline in the revolutionary wave after 1919 tried to find a policy which would enable the communist movement to maintain some kind of momentum. He now distinguished between national movements in Eastern Europe, which he called a "thing of the present" and those of the colonies which he called a "thing of the future." He argued that national movements in the colonies should be supported as they would weaken imperialism. Since the colonies, he argued, were the source of the "super profits" imperialist powers used to maintain their power and to bribe the workers to ensure social peace, cutting off this source would precipitate a crisis which would make revolution in the imperialist heartlands easier. He quotes with approval the following passage from Hilferding's "Finance Capital";

*This movement for national independence threatens European capital in its most valuable and most promising fields of exploitation, and European capital can maintain its domination only by continually increasing its military forces."*

Lenin *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. p.147

Lenin anticipated that decolonisation would produce a massive crisis for imperialism. In this he was quite wrong. Today all the colonies are nominally independent yet no crisis for imperialism has occurred. On the contrary their real

domination by international capital is more oppressive than ever before. Relations of formal domination have been exchanged for ones of informal domination. Oddly some of the new African bourgeoisie, who claimed to be followers of Lenin's idea, such as Julius Nyerere and Amilcar Cabral provide us with the evidence to confirm our views. Nyerere resigned as President of Tanzania, one of the largest countries in Africa, after realising that international finance capital really controlled the country. He wrote,

*Everyone wants to be free ... But to build the real freedom which socialism represents is a very different thing. It demands a positive understanding and positive actions not simply a rejection of colonialism.*

Or in other words we have to fight for socialism not anti-colonialism or national liberation. Amilcar Cabral, the late leader of the "successful" national liberation struggle against Portugal in Guinea-Bissau went further. He argued that "national liberation" was actually an imperialist concept.

*The fundamental objective was to create a bourgeoisie where one did not exist, in order specifically to strengthen the imperialist and capitalist camp.*

Of course what he did not see was that he was part of that bourgeoisie because the USSR which he considered "socialist" was also part of the imperialist camp (which he identified only with the USA). The struggles in Angola, for example, in the 1970s between the pro-USSR MPLA, the pro-USA INLA and the pro-South African Unita movements were not about national liberation but about which imperialist power could ensure the victory of its faction of the bourgeoisie.

Lenin, to give him his due, did recognise that certain countries were utterly dominated by European capital without being formally colonies, for example he noted that Argentina was dominated by British capital throughout the 19th century. He did not see though that relationships such as this could occur generally when national movements succeeded in the colonies. In fact the so called "liberation movements" in the colonies have not threatened capitalism at all. Where they have weakened the older imperialist

powers they have benefited the younger and more dynamic ones. Capitalism as a whole has not been weakened.

Lenin also maintained that national bourgeois revolutions in the colonies could occur at the same time as the socialist revolution in the capitalist heartlands and in some way be allied to it.

*The social revolution can come only in the form of an epoch in which are combined civil war by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in the advanced countries and a whole series of democratic revolutionary movements, including the national liberation movement, in the undeveloped, backward oppressed nations."*

Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 23 p. 60

If the world was, as the Bolsheviks maintained in 1917, "rotten ripe" for world revolution how could bourgeois democratic revolutions occur in such a period? As stated above, the two revolutions belong to different historical periods and are mutually exclusive. It is impossible for the bourgeois revolution in the colonies or anywhere else to assist the socialist one. The two revolutions represent movements of different classes, interests of different classes and must necessarily be deadly enemies of each other. The desperate proof of this contradiction came in China in 1926-7. Stalin pursued Lenin's support for the bourgeois "anti-imperialist" Koumintang of Chiang Kai Shek. The Chinese Communist Party was instructed to co-operate with it even after it started killing Chinese workers. The final result was the brutal and sickening massacre of the Chinese working class in Shanghai and Canton. It was a disaster which turned the course of Chinese and international working class history (and will be analysed in our next issue)

The mistakes of Lenin and the Third International on the national question have bequeathed a poisonous legacy to the communist movement. The left wing of the bourgeoisie has taken them up with a vengeance and exploited them as weapons to confuse and break the struggles of the working class in the ex-colonies and elsewhere. Although this is particularly true of Africa, we are once again seeing these weapons used in European countries, such as ex-Yugoslavia where every bourgeois gang of nationalists, has its



leftist cheer leaders and recruiting sergeants, no matter how filthy their hands are with workers blood (see articles at the beginning of this issue).

### **National Struggles In The Present Period**

Today there can no longer be any pretence that the possibility of national self determination exists for any of the states in capitalism's periphery. Internationalisation of capitalism, which has accelerated massively in the last two decades with increasing globalisation, cannot be reconciled with the independence of nations. The modern capitalist state is national only in the sense that is dominated by the bourgeoisie of a certain nationality. In other respects it remains an agent of international capital and the particular imperialist grouping to which it is presently allied. The real purpose of nationalist struggles today is either to alter the imperialist alignment of the states or to amend their political structure to suit the needs of the imperialist power to which they are aligned. It is therefore, complete nonsense to pretend that these struggles are in some way anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist. They are rather inter-capitalist and inter-imperialist.

It is, of course, true that the last 50 years

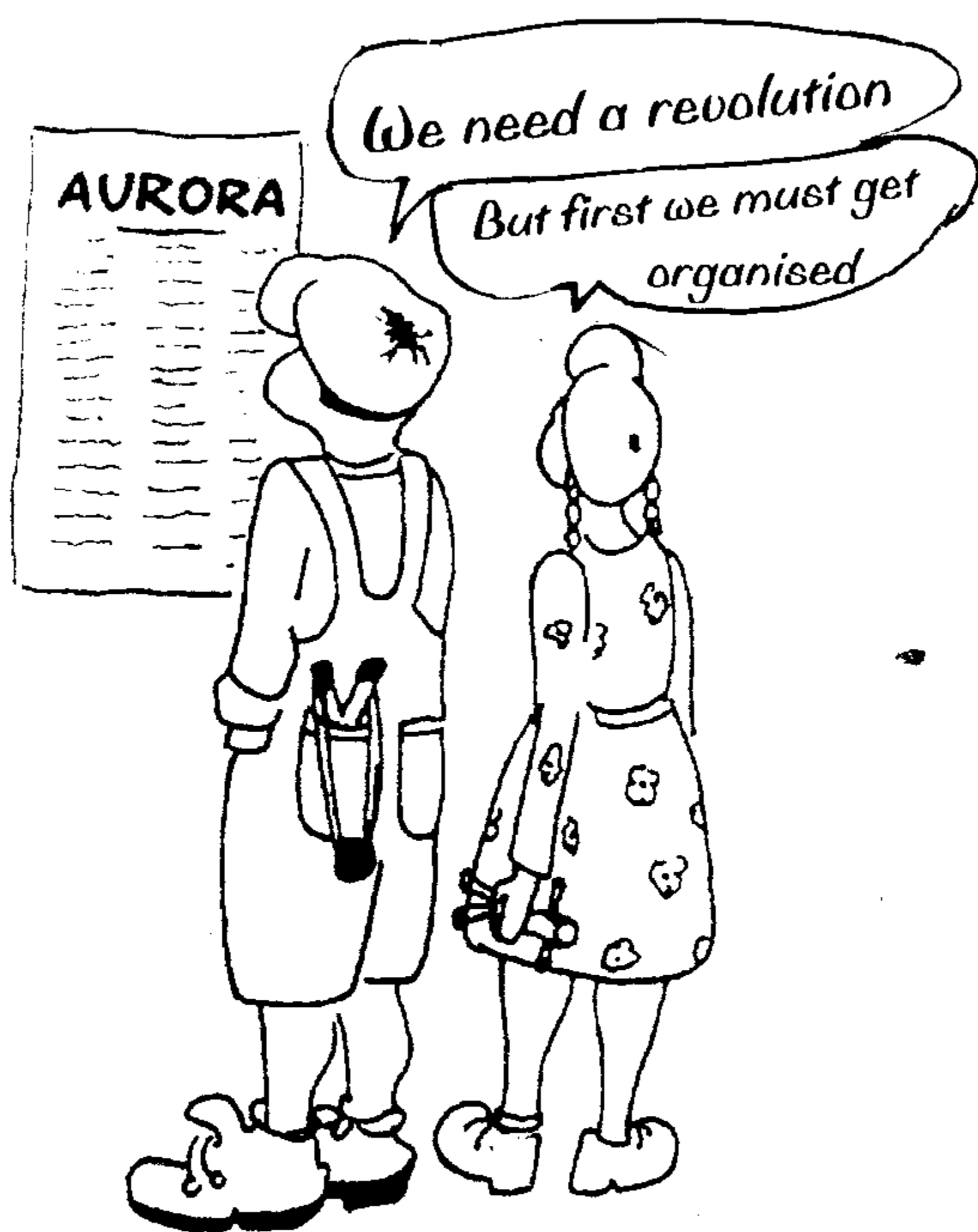
have seen an enormous development of the forces of production in the peripheral countries including Africa. This has also led to huge increases in the numbers of the working class as peasantry have been displaced to the towns and as the population has increased. These factors are, in the long term, laying the basis for revolution and for communism. These developments are, however, completely different from those of the last century which were created by the national bourgeoisie through the formation of national states in which the forces of capitalism could develop. The developments we are seeing in the latter part of the 20th century are developments brought about by imperialism in which national states serve as imperialism's administrative lieutenants. Foreign capital has developed Africa, and foreign capital extracts the dividends. National struggles and national liberation is not a precondition for this development. This is illustrated by the fact that a country such as South Africa is the most developed in Africa but was the last to achieve national liberation, whereas Ethiopia, which is one of the least developed countries in Africa, was one of the first to achieve liberation after a brief period of colonisation. Capital has simply been exported to the areas where profits are the highest. The argument that support for the national bourgeoisie helps lay the

basis for communism is therefore utopian. A more coherent argument would be that, since development is carried out by imperialism, the working class should support imperialism. This, of course, is the slogan of the leading imperialist states. However, the whole argument about the development of the productive forces is irrelevant if we accept that the development of the productive forces was, in 1917, sufficient for the success of the world revolution. If this was the case then, in the subsequent period the tasks of the working class world-wide can only be to struggle for the communist revolution. This means not giving any support to any faction of the bourgeoisie.

Support for the national bourgeoisie in national liberation struggles is today, not simply a mistaken tactic, it is counter revolutionary. It is a policy of the capitalists (of whatever shade) aimed at delivering the working class, in a state of ideological confusion, into the hands of the national bourgeoisie. It is an abandonment of the interests of the working class for those of the bourgeoisie. These positions have been defended by the left communists for decades and 50 years of "national" struggle in Africa have only served to underline just how correct this position is.

CP

## **Aurora Has Been Re-launched!**



In recognition of the fact that the issues facing the working class everywhere are increasingly the same, and as an indication of the organisational strengthening of the **International Bureau** we have decided to publish an international broadsheet in several languages. Our aim is to publish it with the same leading international articles plus others of local or immediate issues for the area/ workplace where we distribute them. *Aurora* 1 was first published in English aimed at the demonstration against low pay in Newcastle in April. It was subsequently pub-

lished in Italian and French. *Aurora* 2 was mainly aimed at the agitation against the war in Yugoslavia and published at the beginning of June. *Aurora* replaces *Workers Voice* so supporters receive *Aurora* free (if you would like a sample copy send a SAE). Anyone wishing bundles to distribute should write to the organisation's address. We have been very heartened at the response to the first two issues and would only ask readers to keep sending us their views on it. These will be published in a future edition of RP. *Aurora* (named after the cruiser which fired the first shots of the October Revolution) has already shown itself to be a useful weapon in the fight against capitalism and its "reformist" apologists. Help us to make it even more powerful ammunition in the struggle for our own emancipation.





# Colombia: A Souvenir From Hell

**T**he article which follows was written by a Colombian sympathiser of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party. We have translated it and published it in order to demonstrate what nightmarish conditions capitalism is creating on the periphery of the world economy. Colombia is as good an example of all the ills of the modern global capitalist system. US intervention on an almost daily basis, a breakdown of civil society and the massive exploitation of the working class and poor peasantry are all to be found there, as well as a totally corrupt and violent form of bourgeois rule. It does not make uplifting reading but it does underline why we have to struggle all the harder for a communist world before we are all plunged into the kind of barbarism that already exists in Colombia.

## The Regime, The Political Institutions And Their Failure

**F**or almost two decades, the political institutions of Colombia have suffered a progressive disintegration. All the institutional framework - the parties, the elections, the executive, legislative and judicial power - is bankrupt. Apart from the usual beneficiaries, nobody has any faith in it and, curiously, everyone considers themselves its victims. The social discipline, practices, political beliefs and customs which legitimise it have gone into crisis, undermined by the appearance of new social, political and cultural phenomena which have brought with them a continual process of crashes and ruptures determined by capitalist development. New circumstances and the tendential evolution towards more extreme forms of exploitation by imperialist capitalism over the masses, obviously demand new ways of governing and administering society.

The symptoms of this situation all work in the same direction; generalised administrative corruption, the rise of the

guerrilla, the narcotics trade "invasion", the parasitic hypertrophy of the repressive apparatus involved in the "internal war" and even natural disasters. These are all interconnected, accelerating a process of decomposition which may eventually prove to be inexorable. All in all, the real movement of society, its contradictions and conflicts, have long since undermined the formal scheme of bourgeois power. The formula used by Lenin in his time to define states of crisis or socio-political rupture, according to which the ruling class cannot govern in the old way, whilst the dominated are no longer willing to carry on supporting the same procedures and power forms, seems to correspond perfectly with the current Colombian situation.

The Colombian political system was conceived towards the end of the fifties as a regime of political alternation agreed upon by the two traditional parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives. Both parties followed each other in power and shared more or less the same roles and attributions within the State apparatus and in the establishing of overall institutional strategy. In fact, de-

spite the formal distinction between the two historic parties, the National Front was a one party regime, with a power and control system which imitated the fascist "system". This gave rise to a profoundly authoritarian, nepotistic and exclusive political system, resembling the fascist corporatism of the Franco model. It was based on a stable alliance between big landowners, the monopoly groups of industry, commerce and finance, with US imperialism. At its head was to be found the bourgeois and landowning élite, with the political, military and religious castes blindly obedient to their interests. Under this regime, the clientele system and the existence of vertical institutional bodies directly controlled by the governing party constituted the means of organisation and the link between "civil society" and the State. Together with the absolute absence of mechanisms of running public affairs other than the arbitrary will of "leaders" and political strongmen, the clientele system stimulated the establishment of governmental kleptomania and a corrupt political caste ready to associate with any power and anyone in exchange for political and financial



backing to perpetuate its position of power. In spite of the fact that this was common knowledge and provoked contempt, the system of corrupt leaders and their dependent followers was an effective means of government in a society which, to a great extent, depended on the State to gain ways to make a living, access to education, health and work. If the clientele "method" created a link between the population and the parties, loyalties and political feuds managed by local and regional leaders who controlled the votes, the electors, public administration and State resources, through corporatism, society and its different spheres were modelled to conform to the needs of the dominant class and strictly subordinated to its interests.

Towards the end of the 70s the regime based on the alternation of parties was formally substituted by a regime where parties competed, opening the political scene to new political forces and creating the illusion that this was the birth of an institutional system capable of integrating the excluded politicians of the National Front. Nevertheless State power continued to be exclusively held by economic cliques, by the so-called local "political class", by the upper echelons of the military hierarchy and the Catholic church. As a rule, no-one who did not belong to these groups, represented in the political leadership of the two traditional parties, liberal and conservative, had the right to access to public administration and executive power, although a few members of other parties, (particularly the "communist" were represented in some of the collegiate bodies (concejos - this term when spelled with a "c" and not an "s" designates the basic administrative cell of the municipality-, assemblies, congress, senate.) Throughout the hard years of the National Front, the Pro-Soviet CP, thanks to pursuing a method of tactical alliances with the "progressive" and anti-imperialist sectors of the Liberal Party, seemed to be a simple appendage of that party.

For years, all those who were not members of the class sectors and the groups who constituted what at the time was called the "National Front oligarchy" were implacably marginalised from the "advantages" offered by the system. Reminiscent of official society during the Spanish colonial epoch, a person's

name came to determine success or failure. Throughout this long period the proletariat lacked any form of autonomous organisation or expression. However the expansion of radical Jacobin democracy, of the nationalist and petty bourgeois movements, as well as the activity of the workers' micro-parties, were marked by the brand of exclusion and constituted, what is more, the first attempt to ideologically rationalise this State to give it a political perspective different to that of the established political regime. All these movements and parties were formed by the army of those belonging to the new strata and middle groups of the population which the development of the capitalist system and State had brought into being, but which were denied any type of independent political expression within the system. Its programmes and political positions reflected more a sense of hatred and resentment towards its exclusion from power, rather than a system of coherent ideas or a thorough critique of the social order which produced exclusion and misery. In spite of the fact that these parties were in the main tolerated by the authorities, this tolerance in practice remained at their discretion. At any moment, under any pretext they could be declared illegal. To this day, Authority maintains this prerogative and in fact, makes use of it at times of mass struggle and political agitation. At best, the possibilities of "oppositionist" political participation were and continue to be limited to a few seats on town councils. Faced with this absence of all institutional means to channel the demands of social groups outside the oligarchy, many had no alternative to engage in political activity other than armed insurgency. When they chose this way they returned to the insurrectionary tradition of the peasant struggle and adopted the usual method in this country's history of settling political conflicts by stirring up civil war.

Following the formal and legal culmination of the National Front at the beginning of the 80s, the real National Front, composed of the same parties and protagonists, continued in power. However a sector of the petty bourgeois democracy graduated in social democracy, considered that the cycle of extra-parliamentary struggles had come to an end. Turning away from their "guerrilla-ist" policy, they joined in the democratic opening which begun under

the administration of Belisario Betacurt (1982-86), calling for a new constitution which would restructure the State, integrate a marginalised "civil society" into the political representational system, and breathe new life into the political process, incorporating the social movements, ideologies and programmes which had developed outside and even against the National Front. Such sectors, in the main arising from the intellectual middle class and the 60s student movement, whose political expression was the insurgent M-19, were finally re integrated into civil and political life under the administration of President César Gaviria (1990-94), but their social - democratic project lost all support when they totally defrauded the expectations which their rural and urban rank and file read into the peace pacts signed by the movement's leaders and the government. In fact when they realised that the peace treaties did not represent the partial realisation of a political programme for which they had agitated over 20 years, leaving a trail of thousands of dead, they faced the harsh reality that their old leaders, now acting as ministers and functionaries of the Colombian State, were applying the neoliberal reform which they had, hardly a few months ago, "strongly" denounced as one of the causes of the war.

As for the most radical sectors of petty bourgeois democracy, they gauged and understood the depth of the crisis of the political system. When they probed deeper into socio-political reality, they saw from the outset the precariousness of the constitution created to remedy the crisis. The insufficiency of pure political will to resolve problems which have their origin in the economic structure of society and not in State legislation or style of government was revealed to them. In their judgement, the official declaration of the constitutional charter could not, in fact, modify that reality. The new constitution, in fact, shares the old judicial fetishism which leads to the false belief that by formulating good laws one can create better men, that issuing or revoking official decrees it is possible to build or modify the structures and social formations created by long historic processes. The constitution can, for example, proclaim the right to work, but cannot offer work to anyone, since employment depends on economic forces and conditions entirely independent of State legislation, forces which,



generally, are related to the accumulation of capital, the market and the business cycle. At best, the constitution can only be a declaration of principles and intentions about what men "ought to be", but it cannot change their habits, their material relations, nor put itself above their real circumstances. Certainly, the inertia of things and customs was more powerful than the political will of the architects of the constitution of 1991. For petty bourgeois democracy, (the CP, ELN, FARC) it was enough to persist with their usual activity and keep up the "revolutionary" rhetoric which they had repeated for years to attract the support that the social democrats had alienated.

That is the cause of the prodigious growth, in geometric progression, of petty bourgeois democracy and of the armed reformists over the last 15 years. Amongst all this the political movement of the tolerated left wing, which openly engaged in politics and trade unionism in a situation of semi-legality, disappeared. One part, the Social Democracy, was absorbed by the so-called "democratic opening" during the 80s and 90s, while another part, the Patriotic Union, The Revolutionary Democratic Union and Struggle, was exterminated, uprooted or sent into exile by the "dirty war" unleashed by the authorities against "armed and unarmed subversion". This left which was erroneously labelled by its more radical critics with the disparaging but superficial term, the "legal" left, was, in fact, more a legalist left, which aimed at winning a democratic peace with "social justice", despite its own illegal status and the authorities outlawing it. Despite its democratic beliefs and its respect for the established order, the only peace the authorities granted to it was the peace of the cemeteries. The only result of this left wing from its martyrdom for democracy was the sacrificial cross, the 'requiem pace' of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand the "other" left, whose ideological-political discourse is, however, exactly the same as that of the "legal left", but without the legalist practise, has taken up arms and declared war on the regime which opposes an expansion of democracy and the realisation of social reforms, has made huge advances over the last 15 years. Its armies, thoroughly tied in with all forms of underground economy and the local and regional interests of colonists, mul-

tinational petrol companies and mining operations, merchants, farmers, etc., prosper and feed on men and resources with the same ease that illegal business becomes the only option for survival within a massively marginalised society.

### **The Dynamic of Relations between Classes and its Role in a Critical Phase of the Political Regime.**

Even when the great oligopolies and the landowning sectors, allied with the multinationals and international finance capital, constitute the dominant social group of forces, the medium bourgeoisie, and also, the new and old petty bourgeoisie (white collar workers, professionals, land owning peasants, intellectuals, shop keepers, artisans, small business men etc.) have shown signs of political activity under their own banners. If only because of their size and influence over the so-called "public opinion" these forces are still very important in Colombia. One can easily infer from this that the political spectrum in Colombia no longer has the same uniformity and no longer presents the same blank face which characterised the period of the hegemony of the National Front. Neither can it be said that the dominant alliance has always been monolithic and undivided and it would be an error to think that its crisis stemmed from external attacks. This is a structural crisis of society in its totality, but it expresses itself as a crisis of the political regime and its institutions. It coincides with the crisis of the imperialist system and the crisis of the internationalisation of several new powers, and with the problems of insertion of the "national economy" within the more interdependent framework of global competition, but it is manifested in the historic and social particularities of the most underdeveloped countries of capitalism's periphery.

For almost two decades, particularly since the downfall of the USSR and the obvious decline of American power in relation with other imperialist metropolises, the dominant groups, in association with a base made up of the medium and petty bourgeoisie, started to divide into rival factions, each one of them, according to circumstances and suitability, lining up behind the imperialist band which promises most advantages and can most further their

respective social and economic interests. The discovery of important petrol, coal and gas deposits, the projects for the construction of a new canal which will unite the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, crossing a strip of Colombian territory in the North West of the country, together with the wave of privatisations, the opening of the capital markets and the internationalisation of the economy, have all added new flammable material to inter imperialist rivalries and those of the ruling groups in Colombia to which they remain joined in facing common threats and enemies, the members and factions of those groups who do not fit in one gang of imperialist capital joins with another. The fact that the countries of Latin America are the object of a great dispute, thanks to its enormous possibilities for the extraction of wealth, in contrast with the patent scarcity of capital and the impossibility of economically existing outside the international circuit of reproduction of the metropolises, has engendered a sharp internal struggle which has cast some of these countries into profound political instability, Colombia being one of the most pronounced examples of this dispute.

From the beginning of the 70s a new phenomenon emerged on the horizon - the drugs trade. It became the most important factor in both finance and industry, as well as the financial backer of political parties. This phenomenon erupted on the social scene with a terribly destabilising repercussion for all parts of society. Under the gaze of its accomplice the administration and the authorities sitting on its money, the phenomenon of the drug trade grew until the North American government and the social factions grouped with it in Colombia's ruling group, fearful of losing its influence due to the threat of an enormous economic power, sounded the alarm against it and forced the Colombian government to adopt a global strategy to arrest it.

The drug traders' response wasn't long in coming. Its representatives and beneficiaries in all sectors, but, especially in the political sphere, adopted a populist anti-imperialist language. The parliamentary "New Liberalism" movement, led by the future presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán (whose assassination in 1989 was attributed to the narcotics trade), and Pablo Escobar instigated various debates in the Senate of the Re-

public against foreign "interference" in the country's internal affairs. Carlos Ledher, another drugs baron, set up the National Latino Movement, a sickening collection of all the scum of society, gathered together by bribery and garnished with fascist language. From the first half of the eighties, the struggle between the ruling groups and the drugs trade, and between the Medellin and Cali cartels for control of the market, has led to an interminable series of tragic episodes, amongst them the murder of the three main presidential candidates of 1990 Luis Carlos Galán (Liberal Party), Bernardo Jaramillo (Patriotic Union) and Carlos Pizarro (M-19) - and has produced the most curious and disconcerting alliances between the "Law" and "Crime" both to share out profits and to combat common enemies (in particular the guerrilla and the Left parties). Despite all the hypocritical scandal of the local bourgeoisie and U.S. government agents about "the war against drugs", the drugs trade remains and prospers wherever activity and life revolves around property, money and power. Therefore, the growing influence of the drugs trade over society is explained by the fact that, as well as being based on capitalist economic power, it depends on the fact that the actual conditions of capitalist accumulation allow no other option of survival for the great mass of marginalised people generated by them, other than crime and illicit business; now this powerful influence creates a new factor of discord and confusion in the situation for the ruling class. The drugs trade is as powerful as money in bourgeois society, in its struggle against it, one part of bourgeois society is fighting not only against another faction, but against its very essence. The dismal results left by the war on drugs are perfectly explained by the condition of society in which this war is conducted. It has generated a lumpen-bourgeoisie motivated by the regular money from dealing; blackmail and violence are the usual means to obtain economic and political results. Fundamentally, this lumpen-bourgeoisie, because it is excluded from "sane legal society" has been obliged to take its fate into its own hands, to despise all manner of intermediary and to see the State and its formal legal system (the system which prohibits it) as a troublesome obstacle, and to see the bureaucracy as an extra cost to its operation.

However, this lumpen-bourgeoisie has opened a way forward through the usual means provided by money, by buying it. And in bourgeois society everything can be bought and sold because everything is a commodity. Nobody escapes its seductions, the lure of easy money has captivated the bourgeoisie and the politicians of all shades, but especially the bourgeoisie in power. The number of medium and high ranking functionaries, bankers, journalists, and business men who constitute the lumpen-bourgeoisie grows daily. No phenomenon demonstrates better the profound truth that at certain times in circumstances of deep crisis during which the legal and formal apparatus of society has been displaced by the growth of new economic forces and relations in which men cannot find satisfactory ways of life under the formally sanctioned practices and conditions, even where laws dictate and impose norms and duties to its representatives, these representatives cannot be prevented from obeying and following their own real material interests. The phenomenon of the drugs trade and generalised bribery of the representatives of a social order make up a glaring example of the contradiction and rivalry which figure amongst the real principles which rule society and the judicial and legalistic formulae which claim to regulate individuals. By breaking with society's principles and merging with its economic forms and relations, the drugs trade shows the impotence and emptiness of laws which claim to regulate and limit human behaviour when their necessities and real interests push them to break with ethical requirements. Therefore the "sane legal society" can only continue as such through the simple possibility of separating, in a schizoid way, real activity from mere formal appearance within a system within which the reigning division of labour imposes the dichotomy between civil (or bourgeois) society and the State, between the real man and the citizen, between the public and the private, between the simple judicial-legalistic fiction of social relations and their real content. Whilst so-called "sane official society" pharisaically pretends to observe the formalities of the sacrosanct "legal order", it knows that it can secretly give in to its unconfessable weaknesses and lusts stemming from its ardent passion for money.

But this sketch isn't enough to complete the picture. As the money proceeding

from the drugs trade works better in the economy if it has been previously laundered, a veritable flood of dollars has invaded every sphere of investment and business. All bearers of the dollar provided by the drugs trade - figureheads, authorities, bankers, businessmen, etc. - have gone on shopping sprees, or dedicated themselves to making important investments in the transport sector and the tourist industry, but have especially committed themselves to the real estate business. Throughout the eighties and most of the nineties, inflation and high prices have been a constant. Apart from high public spending and the fall of industrial production, inflation and the high prices are to be explained by the interference of the drugs trade. On the other hand, the central government has had to resort to harsh monetary measures through the Bank of the Republic to control the exchange rate and avoid the fall of the dollar vis a vis the peso, with the objective of stimulating exports. But this has not been its main, socially divisive economic feature. To the extent that it has carried out what has been called "the agrarian and urban counter-reform" consisting in the centralisation of real estate, the drugs trade has contributed like no other factor to the sharpening of the internal war. Due to its need to rely on a strong security policy for its operations and the interests it represents in society against the industrial bourgeoisie, the small rural bourgeoisie and the poor peasantry, which in many cases it has progressively ruined and expropriated - it has become one of the main sources of financing all forms of social and political violence. So it is that the drugs trade and the lumpen-bourgeoisie often embody a disconcerting paradox, whilst, on the one hand they constitute an additional source of profits for capital and contribute to attenuating the international crisis of capitalist valorisation, at the same time they are a significant threat for the economic powers and the social bourgeois alliances which until the present have made up the politico-social balances of power.

The internal struggles of the various factions of the capitalist class, the struggle of the old landowning groups to maintain their positions, the emergence of a rich lumpen-bourgeoisie stemming from the drugs trade desiring power and territory to control, the interests of the various imperialist powers over petroleum, telecommunications, energy,



strategic investment projects, etc., united in the powerful battalions of international finance capital, have made the country the scene of an ever sharper confrontation. The struggle has reached such proportions that every social and political force, except the workers, has its own military apparatus. In turn, each one of these forces aspires to be the State and attract the approbation of the various economic powers which intervene in the confrontation. These forces seem to operate according to the following logic: first they succeed in taking over an area and erect a pseudo-State. Then, they negotiate with the most powerful economic forces existing in the area, carry out economic and political pacts, exchanging money for security. In association with the regional

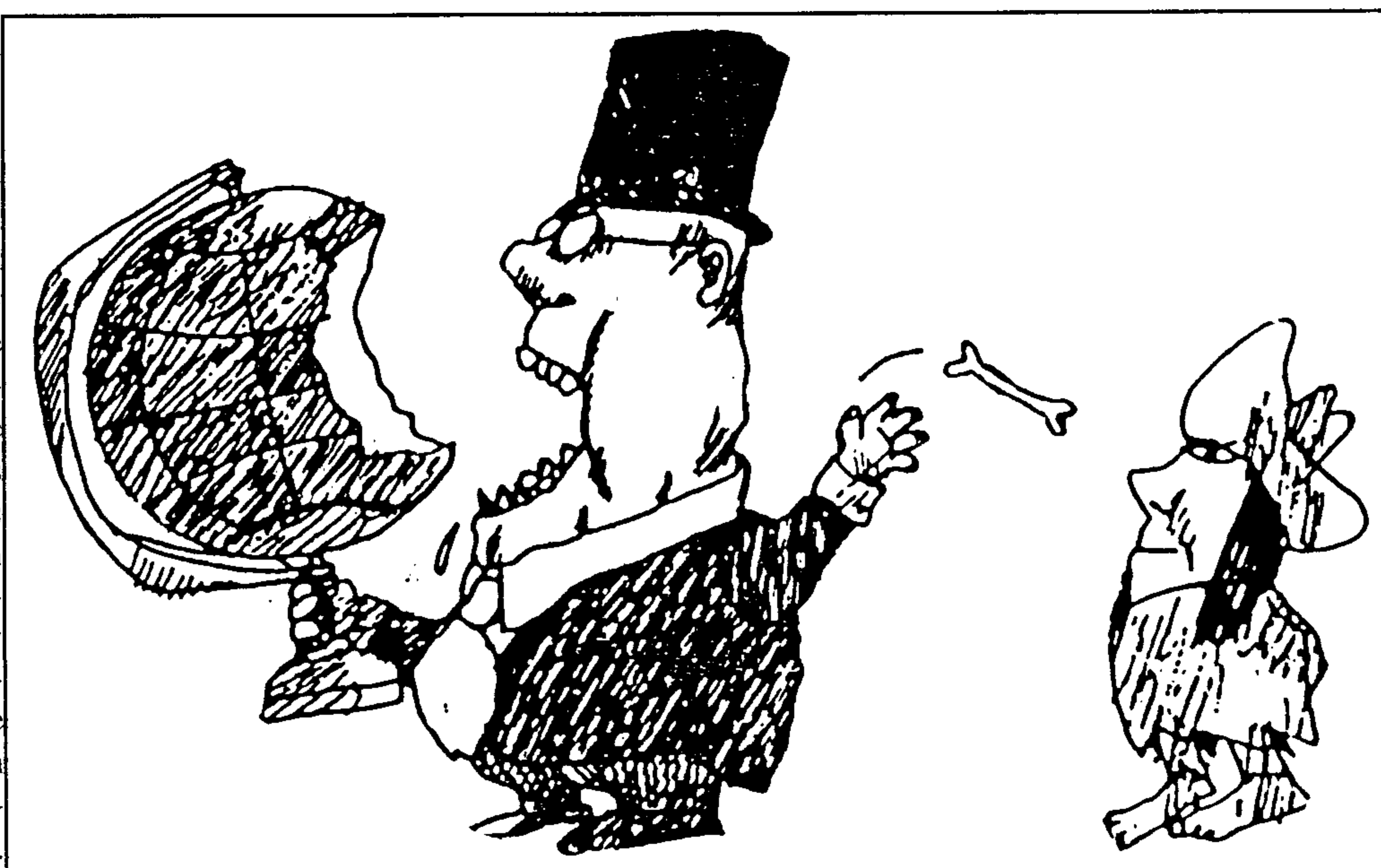
armies, the local economic and social interests have had, for the first time, the opportunity to speak against the central government which has traditionally excluded them. As a consequence, territory and power are dismembered. The guarantees and roles which the State does not permit them is provided by the various armed forces which exist in the country. But this also intensifies the military intervention of U.S. imperialism which sees the interests which its allies in the country have traditionally defended, under threat. The incessant attack which

the block of classes which maintains central State power under an oligarchic political regime suffers, is at the same time an attack on the imperialist interests of the U.S. which are protected by it. The exposition so far allows us to show with greater clarity what the social and political process of decomposition of the bases which sustain the political regime and the traditional institutional scaffolding consists of and what its features are. Foreseeing the consequences of the conflict, with a view to avoiding disaster, the different bourgeois groups, both within and outside the oligarchic regime, are talking about a new social and political contract via the setting up of a new constituent assembly which could reunite the new forces, recognise their place in society and allow them to negotiate amongst each other around the

following question: what will be the political and legal framework in which bourgeois domination is going to operate over the next fifty years? How much power will be allocated to each of them and how will it be administered. What will the new institutions be, what will be their jurisdiction and their powers? As a consequence, the main question which remains to be answered is: to what extent are the dominant groups and fractions of today ready to accept the claims of the new forces already present on the scene?

Whilst this negotiation is underway, war spreads and intensifies as every group follows its self interest in strengthening its own position for the eventual political

which Colombian political power has cherished for more than forty years without achieving it), count on sharing a smaller proportion of power. As can be understood, war or peace are no longer the questions which the struggles and discussions of the bourgeoisie are trying to resolve, the real problems and dilemmas of bourgeois politics revolve around another cardinal question - based on what real interests and forces are the power structures and the strategic institutional projects of the near and medium-term future going to be built? However, whilst the internal conflict escalates, the uncertainty and doubt of the contenders eat away all their decisions and destroy all their calculations.



settlement which, in the main, is accepted as inevitable. But this activity has introduced a new factor of disharmony within the dominant class; the level of confrontation and the loss of control over important areas and populations of the country have introduced a high degree of uncertainty into the political calculations. The different fractions of the bourgeoisie are defined around the various solutions and differing tactics to achieve the same strategy which is to neutralise or make the conflict relatively harmless. There are still rivalries over how this is going to be achieved. For those in favour of immediate political transition without preconditions ask themselves: if we negotiate, how far can and should we get? In turn, those who think they should delay the negotiations until the guerrilla forces are militarily exhausted (a desire

The option which daily becomes more attractive to the bourgeoisie is to sit the guerrilla around a discussion table in order to call for a new constituent assembly which may serve as a first stage to a peace plan and a new social contract which may integrate the insurgency and the social groups it represents within the framework of a reconstituted State capable of dealing with current realities. As indicated above, in 1991 the same problem was set before the dominant class. In that same year the constituent assembly met and promulgated a new constitutional charter, which replaced the 1886 charter. However, because the "new" superstructure was a purely formal creation - without a real infrastructure - it was incapable of bringing about the new balance of power it was proposing. This constituent assembly claimed to produce a double

deadly effect: on the one hand integrate the social-democratic sector of the insurgency, and, on the other, isolate and strip the remaining sectors of the Stalinist and Castroite guerrilla movement of all political support. Although it achieved its first objective, it could not achieve the second, on the contrary, the phenomenon of insurgency expanded progressively. There was nothing behind the armed social democracy, the real factors in the conflict were represented by other organisations, and it was precisely these who were ignored by the assembly. As a consequence, the conflict not only carried on, but deepened and became ever bloodier over the following years.

Generally, however, the divisions amongst the differing groups of the ruling class over the alternatives outlined to face the crisis, are the reflections of the diverse material interests which they represent, leading to the weakness of all in imposing their hegemony. There still has not emerged that "first amongst equals" bourgeois capable of unifying the reaction around a coherent policy and a State project where all interests and particularities which have a real expression within bourgeois civil society are recognised. None of the contending forces is powerful enough to establish a block of strategic alliances safe and stable enough for all the groups and fractions of the ruling class. Such is the reason why, in recent years, the social and political alignments and realignments continuously change and the situation changes as quickly as the incessant flow of events linked to the actions and reactions imposed by the military, social and political confrontation in Colombia.

Nevertheless, due to the absence of a revolutionary workers' movement - in a country where, according to the official census, the number of wage workers surpasses 12 million people and absolute pauperisation affects 20 million (by absolute misery the government understands a) an income less than the normal minimum wage - \$150 per month, b) the lack of an adequate place to live, c) the lack of public services, d) no access to education and social security etc.) -, the crisis of bourgeois power still has not created a revolutionary situation, nor will it necessarily bring about a general uprising against capitalism. To get to this stage, a revolutionary commu-

nist party will be necessary, alongside the general arming of the working class within a wide network of organisations which will unite the dispossessed masses, as well as a wide-scale diffusion of the communist programme. Without doubt, there exists a crisis of the capitalist social system in this region of the world, but this crisis does not yet translate into class consciousness and militancy for communism. Therefore, there is no revolutionary crisis which menaces the capitalist social system as such, but a crisis limited to the traditional oligarchic political regime. Its origins can be identified, firstly in the emergence of new bourgeois and capitalist forces which are struggling to acquire a voice in the State, in second place, in the pressure exercised by the new emerging powers on the existing status quo founded on the regional hegemony of US imperialism, and in third and last place, in a process of open deterioration of the fabric of the civil and ideological-cultural institutions which had kept society together.

Although the ruling class has tried to press through various reforms since the second half of the 70s, the political regime does not only remain inadequate to face the changes manifesting themselves, but has not even undergone significant transformation. Faced with the collapse of the real economy and the growing reduction of profit rates, its own capacity to reform itself remains doubtful. As a consequence, the factors of crisis have continued to mount and the democratic-bourgeois forces who seek a redistribution of the roles of the holders of power have gradually fortified themselves as a political alternative. However, this advance of the current to widen capitalist democracy has not been made without meeting a series of obstacles: routines, inertias, ideological prejudices, inadequate political praxis etc. In fact its recent progress and triumph are no guarantee that it will progress amidst the intensification of the disintegration of the political regime and the administrative apparatus serving it, but reveals, rather, in the short or medium term, a period of transition towards new political and ideological forms of social control and administration of the State. In this way, chaos, growing disintegration, and the desperation which seem to reign in the circles of power stir up and stimulate both the bloody confrontation which traumatises bourgeois

society in this area of the world, as well as the acceptance of extremely authoritarian forms of power. Such elements are, to a great extent, symptoms of the warped state into which the regime has descended. The most obvious feature of the situation is that nothing works, except terror.

### **Can We Escape From Hell?**

#### **A) The Obstacles of Nationalism to the Constitution of an Autonomous Class Movement and its Consciousness: Nationalism Versus the Diffusion of Marxism.**

Next we will refer to the politico-cultural and "sociological" obstacles which confront the effort to build the Party. Besides the white terror extended to the political opposition, whatever its nature, all attempts to consciously act upon the workers' necessity to have their own political party (attempts which go back to the 1920s and extend through the century) have always come up against a generally asphyxiating atmosphere which militates against any possibility of independent proletarian expression.

Alongside the structural weakness of the native Colombian working class, as well as that of the great majority of the countries of the capitalist periphery which demonstrate a position of clear inferiority within the international circuit of capital reproduction of the imperialist metropolises, is to be added the enormous politico-ideological barrier of nationalism as a reaction to the oppressive economic, military and political power of the American superpower over a hybrid social formation where the capitalist mode of production, precisely via imperialism, dominates and functionally controls the pre capitalist modes of production still in existence.

The fact that imperialism is identified as the cause of the fundamental problems of so-called "neo-colonial capitalist society" brings with it a nationalist reaction which befogs consciousness. The entire social and political movement of "opposition to the system" has thus been absorbed by the anti-imperialist movement and its ideology. In effect, "imperialism" is associated with a vulgar, simplistic representation which defines it as the politics of an aggressor,



whose government is accused of harbouring the most perverse intentions and defending the interests of the metropolitan monopoly groups against those of the subjugated nation. Without considering how many elements of truth this way of focusing on the problem contains, the only conclusion which can emerge from it is that the social and political movements of the masses ought to be directed towards protecting or conquering the existence of the "neo-colonial" country as a nation.

Nationalist ideology situates the "Nation" above classes and their differences and, what is more, calls for the strengthening of its economic, state and military power, in order to achieve the supreme goals of "popular sovereignty" and national self determination. All in all, it is about setting up and constituting the nation in the face of foreign manipulation and intervention, that is to say, in the face of imperialism. The most obvious methodological defect of this ideology is that it reduces imperialism to the "politics of the imperialist States", thus separating imperialism from the social system which produces it, ignoring the laws which govern the capitalist structure, dynamic and development. Its fundamental political defect is that it ties the proletariat and its historic project of emancipation to the cart of the national economy and State, sacrificing its organisation, forces and independence to the needs of capital accumulation and the political liberty of the bourgeoisie.

The entire long list of "socialist" and "communist" parties which have appeared in Colombian history since 1924 - especially the CP founded in July 1930 - up to the present day have ended up embracing the nationalist "revolutionary" and democratic creed, replacing the class struggle, including the simple defence of workers under capitalism with the attempt to articulate the mass movement around a bourgeois and petty bourgeois strategy of national liberation. The worker and peasant movement has been used as cannon fodder for the anti-imperialist programme, in as much as the workers' organisations have been subordinated to the interclass united fronts. In this way, according to the politically homogenous perspective of the left parties, socialist tasks and workers' needs have been subjugated to the bourgeois-democratic tasks: to agrarian reform, urban reform, the widening of

political and civil rights, the struggle against the oligarchic political regime, the nationalisation of the soil and the subsoil, statification of the banks and the management of foreign trade, etc. as guarantees for the exercise of sovereignty and the obtaining of more favourable conditions for the development of international and commercial benefits for the nation. The national liberation movement is, therefore, anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic, pursuing, primarily, national self determination and secondly, the conquest of democracy, that is to say, a regime in which the rights and political power of the bourgeoisie attain their maximum expression.

It seems strange to some that the national revolutionary movement - including the old and so-called "new left" has been stigmatised by the traditional ruling circles in Colombia as "Marxist" and even as "communist". However, this is perfectly understandable due to the fact that, for a long time, from the point of view of "liberal bourgeois" ideology professed by the Latin American oligarchies, "socialism" was directly equated with nationalisation or statification of the means of production. Socialism was considered equivalent to State capitalism and the regime then existing in the USSR, meanwhile the national liberation movement made common cause with the USSR and its satellite countries aligning itself in a anti-imperialist united front against what Che Guevara called "the worst enemy of the human species", the United States of America.

If it is true that the association between "Socialism" and "anti-imperialism" is not without foundation, in as much as every genuinely socialist policy is necessarily an anti-imperialist policy, the nationalist ideologies follow a different logic. Even if we recognise that there remain partially valid elements in its formulations, its fight against imperialism is confined to the limits of national liberation but it does not extend to the suppression of capitalist relations of production and power, which gave rise to modern imperialism. Although nationalist currents and ideology arouse sympathy even amongst the sectors which have nothing to gain from the realisation of national self-determination, they are not directed against the abolition of wage labour and the destruction

of the bureaucratic - military State apparatus. On the contrary, it sets as its principle task the development of capitalist accumulation in the best conditions for the growth of their mythical "national capitalism" and secondly, the conquest of "State power" through the constitution of a new State whose governmental personnel will carry out the programme of national liberation that the "oligarchic" servant of imperialism could never crystallise.

### **Can We Escape From Hell?**

#### **B. The material basis of the Difficulties for the Creation of a Working Class Identity.**

However, the omnipresence of revolutionary nationalism and its role in the absorption of opposition political currents and of political thought "against" the system is not the only problem which confronts the progress of revolutionary Marxism in Columbia. Alongside the development of favourable capitalist conditions there have arisen disintegrating phenomena and tendencies amongst the proletariat. Let us elaborate.

Over the last fifty years, the Colombian sector of the working class has experienced as a "class in itself" powerful changes and developments thanks to the growth in capital mass and the reversal of the demographic relationship between city and countryside, whose causes are not only due to the growth of capital, but in extremely complex and vast social and political processes. If in 1950 the ratio was 70% in the countryside, and 30% in the cities, today it is 67% in the latter and 33% in the countryside. The causes of such a tremendous inversion are especially to be found in the population exodus which accompanied the so-called "political violence" of the 1940s and 50s, during which the traditional parties confronted each other militarily, resulting in 500 000 deaths. The National Front, of which we spoke earlier, was destined to end the hostilities between the two parties, as well as centralise power in the hands of the elite which led them both. The violence of this period contributed decisively to the dissolution of the traditional social and economic structure of rural society: it destroyed small-scale peasant production, the domestic and handicraft forms of the division of la-

bour, it accentuated the concentration of rural property in great landed estates, it produced the decomposition of the former classes and strata and forced their later transformation into proletarians or vagabonds in the city or countryside. This process of disintegration was so fast and dramatic that within hardly 20 or 30 years Colombia went from being a rural to an urban country. In such a short period of time, an entire way of life, a culture and a way of seeing the world were destroyed, leaving traumas and unhealed wounds in society and the minds of the population. By 1970 the relationship favoured the urban world rather than the rural. What is more, during the 80s the country stopped depending on agriculture and the monoculture of coffee to become an agro-industrial economy, whose manufacturing sector, in the same decade, accounted for 65% of the country's export earnings. In spite of this quantitative and qualitative strengthening of the working class, the stratification of the working class into privileged and marginalised groups, with large differences in salary and conditions of life as well as the division of industry into a modern and an archaic sector also produce a powerful negative effect in terms of class unity and possibilities of action open to the working class. This involves a phenomenon of which the P.C Int is very aware.

Although the Colombian working class is relatively numerous, we are talking about some 12 million wage earners, these do not constitute a monolithic and homogenous block, neither are all those who are classified as "wage earners" workers. Sometimes the incomes they receive are not really salaries but camouflaged benefits or other types of income. If on the one hand the working class is highly stratified, its composition has not been conveniently determined by a strictly "economic" or sociological scientific investigation. A relatively high proportion is made up of travelling workers who work temporarily on the plantations and farms at harvest time, moving according to the natural cycles determined by harvest times, as well as the repercussions of markets and international prices of plantation products on the local situation (this sector of the working class, due to its very character, is very difficult to quantify exactly). A second sector is made up of informal workers. A third is made up of workers

belonging to domestic industries and to workshops working for medium and large scale industry. Probably, this sector, together with a fourth sector of salaried workers in small service oriented businesses, is the most numerous. A relatively small sector in percentage terms, but of a higher specific weight, belongs to the industrial sector controlled by the national and multinational oligopolies in the car, food, chemicals, rubber, steel, cement etc. sectors. Also, at least two million people belong to the State sector, but here once again one cannot talk in terms of a socially uniform mass, but a very long series of groups and layers of workers which correspond to so many professional and hierarchical categories. There are also the large group of proletarians and sub proletarians who work in the black economy supported by the wealthy lumpenbourgeoisie. The National Narcotics Council (the official body charged with elaborating policies, studying and formulating drugs trade statistics in Colombia) calculates that nearly one and a half million people, without dividing them into workers in illegal drugs laboratories, peasant cultivators or rubbish collectors, paid thugs or traffickers (sometimes the members of a single family assume all these roles simultaneously) - earn a living from the narcotics trade; whilst a million work in activities related to contraband (the black market).

The economic importance of the drugs trade is perhaps even greater than is officially recognised due to the fact that: a) the cultivators of drugs benefit from the climatic diversity and the existence of thermal levels which allow for the planting of narcotic plants with excellent results (cannabis -mild climate, coca -tropical zones, forests, and papaver -high mountainous regions); b) it includes the following areas totally: Putumayo, Caquet, Guaviare y Cauca; and partially: Meta (South -East, and South West), Cundinamarca (the Tequendama region up to Santander), Tolima (North and South), Antioquia (the Urabe region), Nariño (the borders with Putumayo and the frontier zone with Ecuador), Valle (the North), Bolivar (all central and Southern areas, the mountainous area of San Lucas), Magdalena (Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, up to Guajira), Santander del Norte (the mountainous zones of Motilones, the frontier with Venezuela and the borders with the administrative

division of Arauca) and Santander del Sur, Cordoba, etc. that is to say, almost the entire country; c) a considerable portion of commerce, finance, the industry of construction and the tourist infrastructure depend directly on the drugs trade and co-operate in its activities. There is a large city, Cali, whose economic activity almost totally depended on the drugs trade, when this cartel was persecuted by the DEA (the US anti-drugs agency), the economy of that city, with almost 2.5 million inhabitants, collapsed. Alongside these one can add the structural presence of an enormous floating subpopulation which reinforces the extortionate, blackmailing power which goes hand in hand with the capitalist wage relation.

The above, although it needs to be amplified and supported with precise data - bears witness to the high level of dispersion and atomisation, as well as the lack of a permanent link to production, of the working class in Colombia. Also there occur continuous migratory movements from one region of the country to another as well as changes in status and social classification thanks to the powerful and wealthy underground economy and the existence of large cultivated tracts alongside the official agricultural frontier. Therefore we can see a day worker easily become a peasant owner of a small plot growing poppies, or old construction workers from the city becoming coca growers in large cultivated areas. The laundering of the proceeds of narcotic trafficking or other illegal activities is also used to finance legal or less criminal activities like commerce and contraband. This allows significant sectors of the population to quickly gain access to property and significant income. It is no coincidence that the big "bosses" of the drug trade cartels come from humble families from the marginalised districts of the big cities or the depressed rural areas. Pablo Escobar, Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha (El Mexicano), the Charria family are the best examples of this: whilst the first began his career as a simple car thief and the second belonged to a poverty-stricken family of peasants on the Cundiboyacense plateau, the head of the third clan set off as a humble sub-official within the national police. Emigration to neighbouring countries - particularly Venezuela - and to the USA (Colombia is in the top ten of population exporting countries), also contributes to the disin-



tegration of the proletarian identity. These negative factors, along with the temporary character of the greater part of employment in Columbia, which have been in operation for the last thirty or forty years, are at the root of the fact that the working class have never been able to create powerful links nor a common identity amongst themselves. The extremely low rate of unionisation demonstrates this, (hardly 1% of the working population is unionised and most of these belong to unions from the State sector, the only ones with any power and capacity to take action) In the last 10 years there has appeared no sign of reversal of the inactivity of the working class. On the contrary, the last labour reform, despite the fact it introduced flexibility in the labour market and conceded more power to the capitalists in contractual relations, did not provoke a really significant mass protest. The fact that since the latter half of the eighties neo-liberal reforms have been imposed by violence was not enough to unleash the fury of the workers. Nobody lifted a finger to defend what had previously been considered a sacred collection of "rights acquired by the working class" the great majority of which had been conceded during the liberal administration of Alfonso Lopez Pumajero in the first half of the 1940s. The destruction of Columbia's mini-version of the welfare State, in operation since the so-called "Revolucion en Marcha" of the same Pumarejo, as well as the greenhouse economy surrounded by all sorts of protectionist measures granted by the first assessments made by CEPAL to the Columbian State - did not instigate any greater conflicts. Neither were there any disturbances worthy of mention as a result of the high levels of industrial desertification and the application of down sizing which accompanied the long list of privatisations carried out during the latter half of the Eighties and the beginning of the Nineties. In a country where the important economic indicators had depended for decades on the regulatory function of the State, the shrinking of the size and economic attributes of the State apparatus, following neo-liberal reform, brought the intensification of the crisis of the real economy, which lost the market created by the government and the tariffs and subsidies which protected it from foreign competition, and also led to mass unemployment (an important industrial city situated in the South-West

of the country, Cali, today suffers an unemployment rate of 35% of those able to work), the advance of the service economy and the triumph of parasitic and speculative capital. To be brief, it has lead to a new wave of dispersion and the regression of social life to the level of zoological competition and brutality.

Neo-liberal reform has involved the abrupt taking apart of the State social security system, the privatisation of social aid, the pensions system, the gradual reduction of subsidies to public services etc.,. It has also meant the closure of many State social services institutions. The "free-exchange" system seemed to emerge from the ashes of previous political measures which limited it. It not only implied the intensification of the influence of world competition on the Colombian economy, as well as the opening of economic frontiers to new capitalist appetites, but also demonstrated the competitive weaknesses of industry and agriculture. When subsidies, technical assistance, cheap credit, and customs tariffs came to an end, bringing with it the mass closure of business and the fall into mass unemployment (the global rate is now between 15 and 18% according to DANE. There was also the end quotas for fixing the official price of coffee by the International Coffee Organisation de (located in London, UK) and the income from the coffee trade in an open market system regulated by supply and demand, that is to say, by multinational roasting and distribution companies (Nestlé, American Foods, etc.). According to the magazine Time, in the first two years of "economic opening" (1990-92) - a name by which neoliberal reform went in Colombia - during the administration of President Cesar Gaviria (currently president of the OAS (Organisation of American States) situated in Washington. 700 000 jobs were lost in the rural sector alone. The slow languishing of the agricultural economy and an increase in unemployment figures to an unheard of level in the country's history, have so far been the opening's only results. On the other hand, in the few sectors where the State has preserved its interventionist role - particularly within the areas of macroeconomic policies and the fixing of the minimum salary - its function is ever more brutally biased. Over the last decade, for example, the nominal salary increases have deliberately been maintained below the annual

rate of increase of inflation, so that workers real wages have been sacrificed on the altar of the capitalist need to restore profit rates at all costs.

Let us recall that since colonial times and during almost all of the Republic large agricultural, industrial and commercial enterprises in Colombia have counted on privileges, subsidies and monopolies and exclusive rights granted by the State to exploit their respective economic territories like "private fishing lakes" (this label was given by the international magazine Newsweek). The effect of neoliberal reform over such an economic model had to be catastrophic. The sclerotic, stiff-jointed and routinised Colombian enterprises, always linked to political power, did not know how to compete nor renovate themselves nor how to invest nor conquer new markets. The declining rate of profit, originating in the country due to competition between "national" industry with the more profitable industries on the international market, has led as much to the centralisation of capital as to new forms of State intervention. Whilst centralisation (fusions, alliances etc.) seeks to augment the financial capacity to realise investments which permit an increase in the competitive capacity of enterprise, State intervention tends to degrade living standards and the price of labour to the utmost, and has raised above the remnant of the labour movement mechanisms reaching the very utmost in police control and a growing militarisation of civil society.

### **C. The Descent into Terror.**

**M**arxism teaches that, whilst capitalist relations subsist, the process of concentration and centralisation, being determined by the necessities and benefits of accumulation, can only increase capitalist contradictions. The more control over the economy is centralised and the more the economy convulses - and this is just what is happening in Colombia with the affluence of the market for capitals and the great concentrations of international finance capital, the more exploitation must be increased and class conflicts must increase. With the fall in the rate of profit and the aggravation of intercapitalist competition, bourgeois society requires a more disciplined and co-ordinated society; it sees itself forced to meddle in the political activity of

those groups and social strata which base their action on capitalism's capacity to deliver the desired effect, on its possibility of creating a bureaucracy or a new petty bourgeois strata at the service of the monopolist bourgeoisie, sharing in its profits and co-administering the capitalist establishment.

As we have previously seen, Colombia is a point of convergence between the clashes of the imperialist metropolises, the clashes between these and the interests of local capitalist and landowning groups, as well as all of these together against the miserable masses of the countryside and cities. All are on the hunt for maximum profit and know what is to be gained if the others lose. This does not exclude the confirmation of temporary and even long lasting alliances between interest groups who feel solidarity and momentarily come together to defeat over-powerful enemies. Nevertheless, a typical Colombian feature is the tiny social base on which the bourgeois regime rests, determined by the fact of dependence on economic

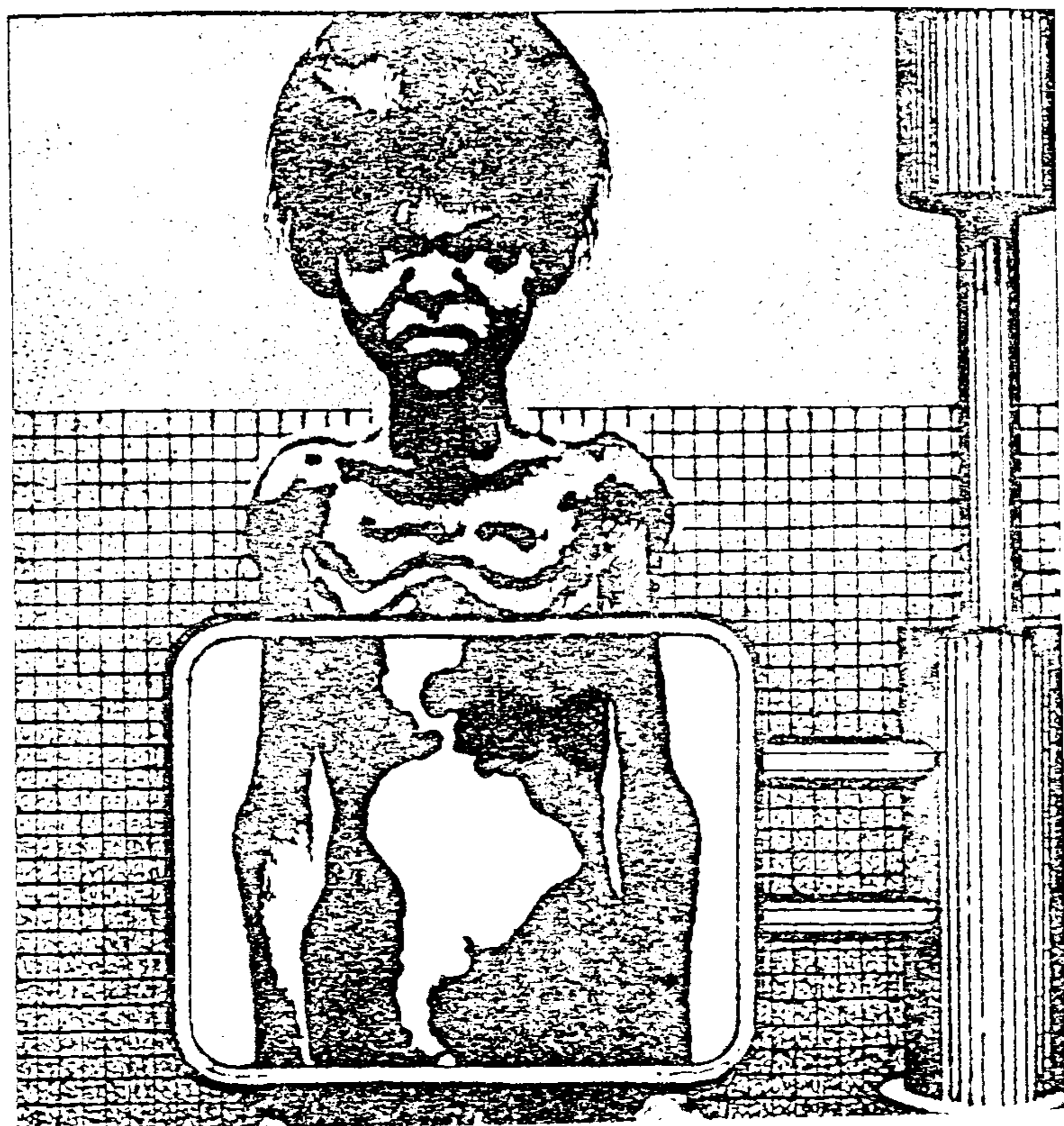
mediation, i.e., its capacity to negotiate and process conflicts, is surprisingly small.

One of the greatest failures of the bourgeois establishment in Colombia has been its inability to co-opt and institutionalise the reformist left. Today it is unable to grant the rewards and favours for services rendered to the dominant power. Besides, the old corporatism offered by the National Front no longer functions in a society open to the international market and subordinated to the powerful competing forces of rival States, companies and armies of the war within. The unions, nationalist and reformist parties those who aspire to office and the petty bourgeoisie, all those who hope to avoid expropriation, progressive ruin and pauperisation which will be the inevitable corollary of the struggle between these forces, will try to decide their fate by offering their services to one of them. The sharpening of inter-imperialist and class conflicts which will accompany this process, will more and more strip away the appearance of legality, neutrality and impartial arbitration

erate ever more openly as organs of imperialist war against the proletariat.

The "Colombian case" has been presented as a model of State terrorism comparable with Turkey in Europe or Korea under the regime of Park Chung Hee. However, just as Man cannot be understood by the monkey, but on the contrary, Man can understand the monkey - let us recall Marx's famous phrase "the solution to the monkey is in Man"-, it is not Colombia's paramilitary, torture and forced disappearances, or scorched earth policy etc., which allows us to understand the current climate, but the "national security" policy of the USA in its struggle to maintain imperialist supremacy. Since the international capitalist offensive to reverse the disastrous effects of the declining rate of profit via the incremented exploitation of the proletariat, in other words, neoliberalism, the ruling sectors seem to favour the reappearance of authoritarian and despotic forms of government. This is why the entire reformist process over recent years has occurred amidst a climate of terrorism characterised by the extermination of important nuclei of the union leaderships and of the democratic-nationalist movement organised by the local "left".

Terrorist politics form part of a well thought out institutional strategy emanating from the US Pentagon under the label of "the national security doctrine". The so-called institutional violence is carried out under the conviction that it will make the subjugated classes more docile. Nevertheless, State terrorism and so-called "institutional violence" are not new phenomena in Colombia. Since the 1930s they have been applied as a fundamental part of the famous relationship between the ruling groups and the sectors of society denied any expression, including sectors of the bourgeoisie, landowners and the petty-bourgeoisie who eventually submit to the needs of domination. Lately, violence has been internalised by all elements who participate in political praxis. In fact, if on the one hand, the already mentioned precariousness of consensus meant that the supporting pillars of the regime were chosen amongst the military, on the other hand it meant generalised and systematic repression conditioned the military character, or more precisely, the guerrilla character, of the political opposition.



groups violently opposed to the rest of society. That fundamental characteristic lies at the heart of the great difficulties which confront the regime in creating consensus around its institutions and political measures, and is responsible for the Colombian State's low power of me-

which the bourgeois State has to promote in order to mediate amongst the various interests to be found in the midst of bourgeois society. Due to its need to take on a function obviously in favour of the most powerful imperialist economic groups, the State and its parties will op-



Military power grew and consolidated itself in the shadow of the National Front. Due to its reduced social base, the National Front required a solid repressive apparatus which would guarantee the exercise of power from the start. Within its strategic project the powerful Armed Forces were essentially given the task of plotting against the so-called "popular movement" and fighting the war of counter-insurgency. As recompense, the military caste received considerable powers, it enjoyed a generous budget and secret special donations managed at the discretion of the military hierarchy, it benefited from a special legal exclusion which placed it beyond civil justice and practically declared its right to impunity within the legal system. Therefore, for example, phrases from international law such as "forced disappearance", "arbitrary detention", or "extrajudicial execution" are not classed as crimes by current Colombian legislation; they may be recognised by the justice apparatus, by the judges or even be the object of "exhaustive investigations" by the organs of State control (attorney's office, public defence etc.) but not punished. Their social privileges, their access to social mobility and the great advantages they enjoy have made them the object of the ambitions of the talentless middle class children who see no other way to build a career other than to enter its ranks. The great horde of ruffians, adventurers and petty criminals who can be counted by the thousand in a society submerged in misery and brutality, also found a living and licence to unleash their sick passions. Today the Armed Forces are one of the principal cogs in the transmission of power in Colombia. Their political training in the National Security doctrine "made in the USA", their apprenticeship in The Americas School within the USA itself, the fact that many of its senior authorities are veterans of the Korean War has made them one of the most faithful props of the system; but it has also meant problems for the latter. Due to the growing crisis of the regime, the collapse in its prestige and the bankruptcy of its institutions, the State Armed Forces tend to act as an independent political party facing the other components of power, to such an extent that they actually have their own political programme, their own rules of behaviour and a strategy which includes all aspects of political-social action in the struggle to smash the

political revolution promoted by the nationalist petty-bourgeoisie.

In spite of the repression, aggression against the interests of the disinherited masses, the increase in absolute misery - which according to official reporting, has reached the extreme figure of 20 million in a country with a population slightly above 40 million - has led to a situation of generalised exasperation, particularly in the countryside and in the shanties around the large cities (according to a recent study by the National University, 80% of the inhabitants of the capital city of Santafe de Bogota live in or on the edge of poverty. This in part explains the growth of the left and the guerrilla towards the middle of the 70s and during a good part of the 80s. This terrified the leading groups of the traditional parties which represent finance capital and the landowners allied with imperialism. The advance of left political parties (especially the pro-Soviet Communist Party) and the armed insurgency in the countryside and the cities, although resting on the support of some sectors of the rural and urban bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, inspired fear not only in the traditional oligarchy, but amongst most of the bourgeoisie, who see in them the "socialist expropriation" of the possessing classes.

In recent years we have learned that ruling class terrorism is directly proportional to the fear inspired by its adversaries. In the 1980s State terrorism grew feverishly and attained genocidal levels in the areas of greatest mobilisation and militancy around the left unions and parties. There have been cases where the unions from entire sectors of industry, e.g. the unions of the cement and banana industries - have been completely wiped out by the criminal action of the bosses' thugs. What at times were known in Italy as "fascist squads" have established their reign in Colombia as "death squads" and "paramilitary groups". One single civil political party of the "left" has suffered the death of over 5 000 of its militants.

But there now exists a sort of generalised and indiscriminate violence which in the last 10 years has cost between 70 and 90 thousand lives per year through various causes (highway robbery, fights, crimes of passion, automobile accidents, "gang wars", massacres, revenges, battles between irregular forces and the

government army, illegal executions, etc.). During the eighties and nineties in the city of Santafe de Bogota alone an average of 26,000 people were murdered with fire arms and daggers. The crudity of the situation has reached such extremes that the terms "social cleansing" or "social euthanasia" have been coined to refer to cases of collective executions and massacres of marginalised and subproletarian elements who cram into the central areas of the big cities.

Although the Left has traditionally found support amongst the mass sectors, particularly the peasantry, it has been isolated from the urban population through repression and a systematic defamation campaign. The power and "popularity" which these parties seemed to have in the marginal districts of the big cities, (Bogota, 8 million inhabitants, Medellin 3 million, Cali 2.5 million, Barranquilla 1.5 million, Bucaramanga 1.5 million), because it was not based on the self-organisational capacity and politics of the masses, was totally spurious. In effect, the Left said nothing to the urban masses, it did not mention its interests nor its problems, it did not fight for the workers' programme, it had no confidence in their initiative nor in their organisations or actions, it limited itself to making "high politics" - to reciting the monologue of the enlightened national vanguard and placed all its eggs in the basket of manoeuvres and compromises carried out within democratic limits. Thus, the repressive and terrorist strategy of the bourgeois State achieved its objective of isolating the left from the masses which did not see in them the representation of its interests. And once it was isolated, its extermination was intensified until it reached a point at which, expelled from social and political life, the very physical survival of its members was no longer possible except in exile and the only terrain for political activity was armed uprising. And undeniably, it had much greater success on this terrain. The unstoppable process of the dissolution of the State in the greater part of the rural areas under the attacks of a militarily victorious guerrilla army. It has behind it 50 years experience of continuous conflict and the support of a peasant mass which has participated in more than 100 civil conflicts beginning with the victory of the republic over the colonial monarchical system in 1819.

JA

## Publications

The Communist Workers' Organisation publishes **Revolutionary Perspectives** quarterly and **Internationalist Communist** (Central Review of the International Bureau of the Revolutionary Party) twice a year. Back issues are on this page. For *Aurora* see advert on p.28.

We have various publications (particularly our **Platform**) in different languages (Farsi, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish and Dutch). Write to the group address for titles (or visit our website). For any publication in Italian write to our sister organisation, *Il Partito Comunista Internazionalista* (Battaglia Comunista) at

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## Our Basic Positions

1. We aim to become part of the future world working class party which will guide the class struggle towards the establishment of a stateless, classless, moneyless society without exploitation, national frontiers or standing armies and in which *the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all* (Marx): COMMUNISM.

2. Such a society will need a revolutionary state for its introduction. This state will be run by workers' councils, consisting of instantly recallable delegates from every section of the working class. Their rule is called the dictatorship of the proletariat because it cannot exist without the forcible overthrow and keeping down of the capitalist class worldwide.

3. The first stage in this is the political organisation of class-conscious workers and their eventual union into an international political party for the promotion of

world revolution.

4. The Russian October Revolution of 1917 remains a brilliant inspiration for us. It showed that workers could overthrow the capitalist class. Only the isolation and decimation of the Russian working class destroyed their revolutionary vision of 1917. What was set up in Russia in the 1920's and after was not communism but centrally planned state capitalism. There have as yet been no communist societies anywhere in the world.

5. The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party was founded by the heirs of the Italian Left who tried to fight the political degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern in the 1920's. We are continuing the task which the Russian Revolution promised but failed to achieve - the freeing of the workers of the world and the establishment of communism. Join us!



# Internationalist Communist

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